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A narrative exploration of community and place in Ireland and what it means to belong

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There's no place like home

A narrative exploration of community and place in Ireland and what it means to belong

Patricia Hehir

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Education in the Faculty of Social Science and Law.

Graduate School of Education

February 2018

Word Count: 48,2780

Abstract

This narrative inquiry explores the broader meaning of community, belonging and home, by probing from the outside in, seeking to make the invisible visible, and uncovering what we take for granted, to get you, the reader, to think and feel about what it means to belong in a place or community. Though a person may be living in a particular location for many years, it does not necessarily mean that they feel that they belong there or have any sense of community and rootedness in the place. That emotional dimension of status or attachment, the intimate feeling of being at home, is something which is not frequently visited or analysed by scholars. Deeper, more searching and often troublesome questions of 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?' cannot be easily isolated from one another and are deeply interwoven amongst broader threads of identity and place, of equality and power, of conformity and exclusion, and of memory and home.

The research takes an approach which permeates the boundaries of the interpretative hermeneutic paradigm and the transformative paradigm. In doing so, the stories are witnessed from the inside, through the direct experiences of people, and the role of the researcher in this model is to understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of the participants, interpreting meaning rather than causes of human actions. However, as an adult education practitioner and community activist, I feel a resonance with narratives of social justice, inequality, and on the conscious recognition of the oppressive depictions of reality. Although I do not situate myself fully in the transformative paradigm, I acknowledge the permeability of the paradigmatic boundaries which inform my approach within this dissertation.

Reflection and commentary on my own learning from undertaking this research is also an integral part of the overall findings and analysis, which is undertaken as a discussion between myself as researcher and a fictional character who is introduced within the body of the work. Our journey brings us to a landscape where the keystones of love, care and solidarity are identified as vital landmarks of self-fulfilment and belonging, and onwards towards a horizon where we can place ourselves within time and space, assuring ourselves that life means something and that we ourselves matter.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

If only the next 45,000 words were as easy and pleasurable to script as this brief but necessary token of thanks.

Firstly, my very sincere appreciation and gratitude to my initial supervisor Dr. Malcolm Reed for his constructive guidance in early morning meetings and lengthy emails, and most particularly to Dr. Sheila Trahar for all her wonderful support, honesty and clarity of direction in the later more onerous stage of this process.

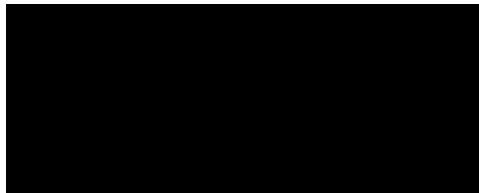
A very special word of thanks to all those who journeyed with me as a fledgling in the field of adult education and community development. I think particularly of the Adult and Community Education Department in Maynooth University, especially Dr. Tom Collins, Dr. Bríd Connolly and Dr. Dave McCormack, from whom I learned so much and who encouraged and nurtured me along this research pathway, giving of their valuable time, energy and invaluable experience.

Friends and family are hugely important to me and without them, all else is colourless and irrelevant. I started off on this doctoral programme with a very special person whose insights, support and friendship I will always treasure and whose story has yet to be told. Thanks Dor.

To my wonderful family, particularly Muireann, Maebh, Tadhg and Laoise, who listened to my rants and ramblings, and especially my father Pat, who always believed in me and nudged me along with support and love. Finally and most particularly, to the women in my family, my grandmother Mary and mother Joan who are no longer with us, and who did not have the same opportunities offered to them as I have been so fortunate to experience. I have felt their courage, integrity, strength and love surrounding me as I journeyed through the research and gave voice to fragments of their stories. I hope I have done them justice and I dedicate this dissertation to them with love.

Authors Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

A large black rectangular box used to redact the author's signature.

SIGNED: DATE:.....

Dec. 21st 2018

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Chapter 1

Untangling the Knots - Signposting the research landscape

Why this theme, why these stories, what is of interest here? These and countless other questions wracked my brain over the course of the past few months and even years if I am completely honest with myself. Confusion, total and utter mazed thinking, a jumble of varied thoughts and ideas flew in every direction, and I struggled to find a central thread, a clear theme which I could tie up and neatly encapsulate in a coherent, intelligent academic fashion into an acceptable and meaningful dissertation. Feelings of dense despair and despondency flooded over me and I plagued myself with my own insecurities; have I taken on too much here? What am I thinking of, doing this programme and research in the first place? Can I possibly do this? Yet as I hesitate and dither, I happen upon a piece of writing by Jeanette Winterson, which sparks and ignites something inside me;

The stories I want to tell you will light up part of my life, and leave the rest in darkness. You don't need to know everything. There is no everything. The stories themselves make the meaning (Winterson, 2004, p. 11),

and relief, or a semblance of an exhalation, trickles reluctantly through me, and I begin to get a sense of belief that maybe, just maybe, I can do this. I think I have the ingredients required, though I ponder what I can cook up with these varied flavours which might satiate the reader and satisfy the palate? I had toyed and played with many ideas for this dissertation, for example, sustainable community development is something which interests me strongly, and which I have been quite actively engaged with for many years. However I had no clear and manageable focus and failed to find a clear focus for continuing on this thread. As an adult and further education practitioner with over 25 years of practice in many diverse areas within the field, journeying into the experiences of adult education

tutors within the education and training board where I had recently worked had seemed to be a practical and somewhat useful theme to pursue. However recent major changes in management, at both national and regional levels, poor communication within the organisation and a lack of support by senior management at the time, diminished my motivation, and my gut feeling was that this would not sustain my interest long term. I had considered doing something fun with music, choirs and adult learning, as music is a huge lifelong obsession of mine and was what I studied as an undergraduate many moons ago. However I could not find a clear justification for why I would undertake this course of research and sadly that idea fizzled out before it ever even drew breath to sing or even croak a note.

Threading the loom

What to do then? Back to the ever faithful gut feeling, which, as I grow older, lets me down less and less. As I reflected and pondered, I was increasingly lured to notions of home and place. Vague tendrils of ideas budded and grew. Thoughts began to flourish. Whispers, mutterings and echoes which had been freelancing madly though my mind, were given permission to become louder, more exuberant and take form, and I was drawn more and more back towards my original passion of community and people and ultimately, to the overhanging shelter of belonging. I suppose I have always been involved actively in community, no matter where I lived, and I did not lick it off the ground either. Not long after we moved to Oranmore, a suburb of Galway city, my father became involved in the board of management with the local school, trained the local junior football and hurling teams, coordinated the community games annually, helped to setup the Credit Union in the village, to name but a few of his activities. Mother also played an active role in the community, more particularly with the Church and associated groups, especially in supporting young priests, meals on wheels, and helping people in need through the work of a local Vincent de Paul group. Further back,

with both of my parents coming from a rural agricultural background, I recognise that this was part of their DNA. Working together as part of a group or 'meitheal'¹, was an intrinsic part of living and thriving in the community. No one small individual farmer would have either the people power nor the equipment to plough, sow, weed, thin, and finally harvest the crops, nor to muster livestock, without the vital assistance and co-operation of their neighbours. Indeed it was my great grandfather's refusal to comply fully with this way of working and living in his local community, which led to him having to leave Ireland for the distant land of Australia for the best part of a quarter of a century. The story of Paddy 'The Kid' Casey², his yearning to belong within the community which he had left behind, and the generational effect of his leaving and subsequent return on the family line and the neighbourhood of his small village in rural Co. Clare, is one which is recounted in chapter 4.

But why this passion and constant draw towards community, belonging within a community and having a deep sense of the importance of place and identity within the community? A number of years ago, after my grandfather had passed away at the wonderful old age of 99 years and the home that he had lived in with grandmother in their later years was sold on, my uncle attended a funeral of a neighbour in the old homeplace of Corofin in Co. Clare. I remember clearly how he looked and the lonesome tone of his voice when he recounted that after meeting all the neighbours, commiserating with the bereaved family, and partaking in the habitual tea, buns and ham sandwiches, that there was no home place to go to, no family member left behind to visit and indulge in reminiscences and stories about the departed. It struck a chord deep within me then that after having an intimate connection with the district for almost 1000 years and holding land there for much, if not all of that time, there is no longer a 'home place', a place to bring

¹ A Meitheal is an old Irish tradition of sharing labour and equipment among neighbours, which is in turn reciprocated.

² Paddy Casey, nicknamed 'The Kid' as there were other Casey families in the locality with males of the same first name. Others were referred to as 'The Stag', 'The Bull', and 'The Buck'. There are further references to nomenclature in chapter 5.

the children and grandchildren. For fear of being accused of trespassing, I cannot show my own children the fairy fort on the old farm, surrounded by an ancient crumbling wall, nor can I bring them to the high garden built by my great grandmother at the fork in the road between the farmyard and the 'Tinker's Lane' which led to the county town of Ennis. They will not be able to swing from the branches of the old oak tree where generations of Hehirs and Caseys, Kellys and Foleys and their many ancestors played, hid and courted, nor shelter under its vast boughs. Nor is it likely that they will ever picnic and tell stories out in the wildflower meadow under the shadow of the crag. I am reminded also of my neighbour's sadness as he told of knowing where the tide was at by looking at a particular rock which lay in the water right beside his old house on the shoreline, on the remote coastline in western Co. Galway, and of how he missed seeing the water line going up and down on the stone.

Weaving and Warping

My own story also needs to be played out here. Though it is over 30 years since I last lived full-time in the place where I grew up, I still answer 'Galway' when asked where I am from, then adding 'but I'm living in Meath.' I know that there will be nothing to draw me back to that place, one of the early commuter belt zones around Galway city, when my parents no longer live there and all the old neighbours are gone. Most of my school friends have already departed, a generation lost to the disaster of the previous recession in the 1980's. For me, this choice of inquiry or journey has evolved from the fact that I am a 'blow in', an outsider. My seed, breed and generation have not come from this parish or county, or even this side of the country, and have instead come from rural areas in the west of Ireland. However due to emigration, premature deaths and poor economic prospects for many decades, no close family members now live in either location, and the homesteads and land on both sides have been sold on. The significance

of this never entered my thoughts until recent years as my own children grow older and my personal circumstances are changing in mid adulthood.

In recent months, the boggy field behind the row of houses where I grew up, which was boundaried on the other side by a small housing estate of perhaps 40 detached houses, began to hum and throb with the noise of excavators, pile drivers, gravel trucks and the voices of yellow jacketed builders and labourers, welcome sounds to many after the dearth of such activity in the bleak years after the building bubble burst in this country. This was a soggy piece of poor ground which was home to frogs and bog cotton and buzzed with countless insects and butterflies. When I sent a picture of the partially constructed houses to my brother who lives in France, he noted sadly that this was the last remaining place left where we used to play, and now this too was gone. For fear of coming across as maudlin and excessively nostalgic for notions of an idealised and romanticised past, these examples are articulated here merely to put pins on the map of this journey and to identify where and how this idea was conceived, and of what planted the seeds for the following research and exploration.

Exploring Community and Belonging – some probing questions

My mother has recently passed away and the old neighbours are one by one disappearing like pieces off a hotly contested chess board. Windows grow dark, and soon there will be little to connect me with that home place. The old homestead will grow cold and overgrown, becoming a memory of a place where I once grew, lived, loved and left. This raises questions in me now about where I belong, where is my home, what is my community now and what is it that makes me part of that community? Is it about people, or place, or both? Further research questions which I explore include how we identify with a 'culture of place' and what is the deeper meaning of what is home? I also question the effects of not conforming, of being on the outside, and deliberate on the consequences of this exploration on community development practice. I want to bring you the reader,

not only into my ordinary inconsequential world, but more importantly, through exploring the stories and experiences of other voices whom you will meet throughout our journey, to create a clearer understanding and awareness of some of the threads which weave together the fabric of community, of what it means to belong and be part of the place that may or may not be home, and hopefully to come to a greater understanding of community and identity in Ireland.

Threads of Connection

Rather than a specific homestead, or townland or village, my place of origin has become a larger geographical area, defined by time, history, sentiment and generational nostalgia. People care about the meaning of belonging and it is deeply rooted in our poetry, stories, song and in the nostalgic rememberings of the diaspora. This is not just an Irish issue but has universal resonances. Disruptions to populations and societies due to conflicts, economic inequalities and climate change, along with ongoing global displacement and issues of immigration, are headline themes on a daily basis, some of which are having a huge impact on the idea of community.

Broader questions are also provoked about community, as well as participation in community, displacement, the Irish diaspora, and questions about inclusion and exclusion, identity, and citizenship are also raised throughout the course of this research. Therefore the multifaceted theme of 'belonging', home and community which began as a series of observations and reactions, and which grew into niggles and queries, is one which I wish to explore and untangle.

Contextual Rationale - Framing the Pattern

From an Irish cultural context, this is an area which I have not seen visited by other researchers. A large aspect of the reading undertaken as part of my research has uncovered much of the historical, social, economic, political and other strands of

community. Communities have been based on ethnicity, class, politics or religion, they may be large or small, affirmative or subversive in their relation to the established norms. Communities vary from traditional villages and urban localities in industrial cities, to virtual communities and transnational diasporas. Sociologists, political scientists, historians and anthropologists among others, have contested and argued their use of the term 'community'. I want to explore the broader meaning of community, belonging and home from the outside in, to make the invisible visible, to uncover what we take for granted, and to get you, the reader, to think and feel about what it means to belong in a place or location. Just because someone is living in a particular location and has done so for many years, does not necessarily mean that they feel that they belong there or have any sense of community and rootedness in the place. That emotional dimension of status or attachment, the intimate feeling of being at home, is something which is not frequently visited or analysed by scholars. Those probing and often troublesome questions of 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?' cannot be easily isolated from one another (Loader, 2006), and are deeply interwoven amongst broader strands of power and conformity, of identity and place, of equality and identity, and of memory and home. These require a teasing out and a disentangling of the clumps and snarls, of fragments, stories and reconstructed memories.

Personal Rationale – Theseus in the Labyrinth

As a 'blow-in' myself, I have some understanding of what it is to be displaced. Both my parents, and all of their siblings had to move from their place of origin for mainly economic reasons. Both my brother and I have also moved from where we grew up, and it is highly unlikely that any of my own children will continue to live in their place of origin. As mentioned earlier, the theme of 'community' is one which is close to my heart as I spend quite an amount of time involved in the community and voluntary sector locally. For me, the idea of 'belonging' is therefore a natural extension of community, and like the mythical character Theseus who was given a

skein of thread in order to find his way out of the Minotaur's labyrinth³, allows for exploration of ideas on who am I, where do I come from, and where is my base, as I explore the twisting and branching paths that bring us along this journey. However these themes and tresses are only at one level of our exploration. If we look at these strands as the base of our weaving on a vast loom of thoughts and words, as on the warp⁴ of our frame, then other threads on the weft⁵ that I am curious to probe further include those of memory, identity, nostalgia and connection with the landscape. The research explores how perceptions of and values attached to landscape fix memories to places, which themselves become sites of historic identity. This aspect features strongly in the experiences and stories in later chapters.

Creating the Tapestry

In as much as any creator, chef or weaver can display their wares and demonstrate the creative process to others, the following section endeavours to briefly outline the direction followed and the various elements drawn upon throughout the process of undertaking this research. According to Polkinghorne,

narrative is the form of hermeneutic expression in which human action is understood and made meaningful. Action itself is the living narrative expression of a personal and social life. The competence to understand a series of episodes as part of our story informs our own decisions to engage in actions that move us towards a desired ending (1988, p. 145).

I am not sure where this desired ending may be or where my journey will bring me, but following this exploration, I will hopefully end up with a deeper perspective on identity and place, and what it means to belong and the awareness of the more

³ An ancient Greek mythical figure, a half man and half bull monster who lived in a labyrinth created by Daedalus. Every nine years, seven of the most beautiful maidens and seven strong young men were sent from Athens to be sacrificed to the Minotaur.

⁴ The vertical threads on the mainframe of a weaving loom.

⁵ The horizontal threads passed through the weave by a shuttle.

profound implications for community development practice in Ireland. This will be realised by charting a number of pathways.

The following section is a brief outline of some of the strategic theoretical texts which I explore during the course of our journey. The various strands researched, which have already stretched my own understanding and preconceived notions of the broad theme, much like a piece of pastry being rolled out, flexing and yielding on the cold slab, are quite diverse. Firstly, a critical review of the relevant literature is undertaken in Chapter 2. In my wanderings through the labyrinth, I have been drawn to various texts and authors who have helped to illuminate my thinking and light up the pathways on this journey. I found Max Neef (1991), Pagel (2012), and Lukes (2005), particularly useful for giving perspective on our basic desires and needs as humans, and what we need to help us to flourish in community and society. The exploration of community is quite expansive and takes on board a wide breadth of reading including, for example, Ledwith (2011), Delanty (2010), McMillan and Chavis (1986). In terms of a general exploration on 'belonging', I was captivated by the writing of Guibernau (2013) which helped to broaden my thinking and expanded my palate in relation to the theme. Others such as Armstrong (1993) were invaluable when looking at issues of boundaries and traditions. I drew strongly from the writings of Baker (2009), Lynch (2009), Abrams (2005) and again, Lukes (2010) when exploring themes of power, equality and exclusion. Probyn (1996), Brubaker and Cooper (2000) were particularly beneficial on the subject of identity. I very much relished the ideas, thinking and writings of Stewart and Strathern (2003), Eakin (1999), and Walder (2011) on themes of landscape, memory and nostalgia, and in addition, hooks (1991, 2009), Appadurai (1995) and Case (1996) were among those I delved into when coming back to the theme of home and place. I am confident that this will help to give a clear but not exhaustive overview of the context, exploring the connections that people make in order to belong within their community.

The next section outlines briefly the paradigm used and the approach taken which underpins this research. In terms of the methodology, I have used writing as a method of inquiry in order to explore the theme from a narrative approach, particularly using autoethnography, dramatised interviews and fictional interludes to interpret and contextualise the evidence in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Post-modernity has eaten away at the edges of authoritative traditions and has given many of us a space in which to speak with less authority about smaller parcels of knowledge-in-context and to tell more local stories

(Speedy, 2005, p. 63).

So why the narrative approach? As human beings, we have told stories and lived out stories from time immemorial. Story telling is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and of making meaning of our world. These lived and told stories are one of the ways through which we fill our world with meaning and engage one another in building lives and communities (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). I had previously been intimidated and disappointed by my earlier experiences undertaking research while evaluating community education programmes, and I had little success in finding any programme of study which appealed to me creatively and allowed for greater expression of the richness and depths to the facts and information which I knew lay beneath stories uncovered. When I first undertook this journey into the EdD programme, the main attraction for me was the narrative genre, and the intriguing aspect of being able to use stories to carry out social research. I was and still am, captivated by the terrain, the blurry edges, the challenging and sometimes difficult boundaries of expression, and the beauty and creativity allowed and indeed welcomed by messy text and thick description. What better ingredients could I ever hope to be gifted with in order to undertake this daunting yet exhilarating challenge?

As Speedy noted above (2005) I am seeking to untangle and allow expression of the small stories, the hidden parcels, which may divulge something more of the experiences of people and community. I like and am drawn to ontological notions of narrative ways of being, and knowing that we understand the world narratively. In choosing suitable and knowledgeable companions for this quest, I find that I am drawn to voices such as Polkinghorne (1988), Bruner (1991) and Niles (2010), who stress the ontological and epistemological significance of narrative. The way in which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) draw on Dewey's (1997) notion of experience for their narrative inquiry methods also appeals to me and is explored further in chapter 3.

If we draw on the features offered by Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007) in their contrasting approaches to research, namely normative, interpretative and critical, the dial for this research turns towards the interpretative paradigm, though not exclusively so, and the blurring of boundaries between paradigms is further explored and expanded upon in chapter 3. Therefore the analysis of data will mainly involve the interpretation of meaning rather than causes of human actions, taking the form of verbal descriptions and explanations. From an epistemological stance, the methods of data collection are more personal and interactive in the spaces created between reader and writer, which extend, provoke and create knowledge in new ways (Speedy, 2008). Interpretivism also emphasises constructed realities and rich description, which links in beautifully with the approach taken in later sections of this research where the stories and fragments of experience from the various voices are given life and expression. This paradigm also stresses that research is a product of the researcher's own values and cannot be independent of them. In researching and writing about something as personal and integral to oneself as 'belonging', inclusion and place, it is almost impossible to imagine an alternative or more appropriate approach.

An additional element of the approach taken within this research, is that it aims to follow what Usher calls the 'hermeneutic circle' of interpretation. The main slant of this approach is its position that knowledge formation is not necessarily linear, cumulative and often final, as per the empirical approach. Rather it is spiral in nature, not seeking to form a complete circle of meaning and finality, and instead revolves onwards, continually creating sense and understanding from the interactions between past and present, between researcher and research subjects, between time and place (Usher, 1996). Interpretivism's main tenet is that research can never be objectively observed from the outside, rather it must be observed from inside through the direct experience of the people. The role of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm is to, "understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 19). As a researcher in this paradigm, I seek to understand rather than explain.

Tracing the Pattern

The following section briefly sets out the main threads followed throughout the course of this research. These include an exploration of fundamental human needs, looking at definitions of community and home, consideration of matters such as inclusion and exclusion, identity and power and journeying along pathways where we consider and discuss issues of place, memory and ultimately, belonging.

Humans are inherently social creatures. We gather in groups the world over in every known human society (Brewer and Caporael, 1995). A first step into this sprawling and multifaceted entity will begin to explore broad concepts of community and start to pin down the essential elements required by humans to belong in community and society. The following is a thumbnail sketch of some of the theorists and authors who will be drawn from on the panoramic journey across this particular landscape.

Maslow is an obvious starting point with the basic hierarchy of human needs (1954). His premise, based on a very individualistic approach, has been taken up by later theorists such as Max Neef, who have expanded it to investigate human well-being, happiness and quality of life matters, in a more inclusive and complex fashion (1991). Authors such as McMillan and Chavis (1986) discuss a number of predictors which create a sense of community including membership, influence, reinforcement and a shared emotional connection. I delve further into their ideas, to explore and make connections with some of the main characteristics in Irish cultural and social identity, for example; the waning influence of Church in terms of conservatism and influence on social mores; participation in Gaelic sports at local and national level, which can generate huge emotional rewards and strengthen the sense of ownership within a community by having a local player selected for the county team; the influence of language and culture on integration, particularly for those who were transplanted from the west of Ireland between the 1930's and the 1950's. I am curious to explore those strands and themes, to see if one can be 'in' but not consumed by the wider societal norms and homogenised beyond individual recognition, and also to unravel what the territory is like on the outside, what it feels like to be on the outer margins of the community. These are discussed more comprehensively in chapter 2, and in later sections through the stories and reconstructions which follow.

Added to this mix, is the interesting finding from social psychology research, which has shown that people have boundaries protecting their personal space. Groups use language, dress and ritual to create boundaries to protect against threat and to safeguard their intimate social connections. For one of our storytellers, whom I call Séamus, language and culture is certainly a strong identifiable element and one which directly relates to his and his family's relationship within their townland. It is these and other points which I expand upon in chapter 5.

An indepth exploration of these theoretical concepts is expanded upon in Chapter 2, and lays the foundations for a more complete and comprehensive review of the relevant literature, which continues to shift and sway the research questions that I articulate later in this chapter.

How this journey unfolds – methodology and methods

The famous Arnolfini portrait painted by Jan van Eyck in 1434 depicts clearly in the foreground, a couple taking their marriage vows, in surroundings which are ornate and richly decorated. The couple are the only people noticeably evident in the painting. In the background is a convex mirror which, under closer scrutiny, appears to show at least three other participants in the event. Though seemingly indistinct and unimportant to the overall setting, the inclusion of these others and the visibility of the rest of the chamber is illuminating, reflecting other items, angles and parts of the room which are not visible at all from the initial viewing. It is with this in mind that I chose the approach taken in this research, to look behind what is obvious and visible, to reveal what is lurking in corners and alongside the skirting boards, and to bring to light the small stories, the hidden nuggets of people's experiences, and fragments of memories about person, place and belonging.

In order to explore this terrain, I undertake a number of approaches which link into the overall paradigm. One approach taken is autoethnography, which draws on some personal episodes about home, feelings of exclusion, expressions of being an outsider, and experiences of community. Significant authors in this sphere include Speedy (2008), Sparkes (2003), Ellis (1997, 2004), Bochner (2000), Delamont (2009), among others. Writing is not just a 'telling' about the social world or a 'mopping up' activity, but as described by Richardson (2000), it is also a method of discovery and analysis, a method of 'knowing'. This 'knowing' helps towards shaping a more complete picture of who I am, what I am, where I am, where I have come from, and my place in the community. With this approach, I am going on a journey of

discovery, a journey where I will forage for fragments of episodes in my life, probe into messy and uncomfortable areas of my personal experience, and forge connections with where I am now on my own journey and my sense of place and identity within my community (Ochs and Caps, 1996; St. Clair, 2005).

I also use dramatized interviewing to reveal the voice of one of those people and families transplanted by the Land Commission⁶ in the 1950's, still living today. The full historical context of this body and the relocations which occurred under its remit is more fully explained in chapter 5. The use of different and distinct fonts is used to illustrate the various voices within the dialogue. Kiesinger and Tillmann-Healy along with Ellis similarly view interviewing as a collaborative communication process occurring between researchers and respondents, which involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both (1997). They view the stories, feelings and insights of the researcher in this interactive encounter as more than just tactics to encourage respondents to open up. Throughout my admittedly limited experience in using this process, I found it to be a really intriguing way in which to collect knowledge and experience. Rather like travelling up a river to its source, the main flow and thrust of my questioning and probing broke and meandered into several diverse and surprising tributaries, which enriched the tapestry of findings, creating unexpected episodes. These are expanded on more clearly in chapter 5.

I want to also use a voice from an older generation, that of my great grandfather. Paddy Casey left western Ireland in the 1890's, which was at that time still on the outer edges of the former British colony, bound for Australia. When he returned nearly 25 years later, which was just around the time of the great upheaval and the

⁶ In a nutshell, the Irish Land Commission was created in 1881 and was the body responsible for the redistribution of farmland in most of Ireland for almost a century.

Rising⁷ in 1916 and prior to the War of Independence and Civil War in the early 1920's, it was to a vastly changed society. As I never had an opportunity to meet with Paddy, I have to depend on my father's reminiscences as his eldest grandchild, and various recollections and stories from other family members to explore his story of dislocation and attempts at reintegration into a very different world. The overall construct and lynchpin for this exploration will be a fictional character, which will be used to explain and analyse the findings. For this process, I learn from and depend on the experience of skilled exponents such as Speedy (2008), Ellis and Bochner (1996).

There are established traditions of using fictionalised research within the social science field. Yalom (1991, 2000) has contributed novels in psychotherapy to depict symbolic equivalents of clients in order to portray people and events which would otherwise be unethical. Clough (2002) has created short stories to depict tales of schooling which would otherwise remain untold. Drawing on Ellis and Bochner's (1996) distinction between "making something" and "making something up", Sparkes (2002) differentiates between fictionalised accounts of an event or events, where the validation rests on "being there", and creative fictions which rely on the production of evocative texts and on verisimilitude. In her writings, Speedy (2008) converses on the use of fictional characters to explain complex ideas and along this journey, I am also accompanied by such a character, a tree, or a great Ent, the memory of which remained with me from my earliest reading of the *Lord of the Rings* as a child (Tolkien, 1986).

⁷ The 1916 Rising was an armed insurrection which took place mainly in Dublin and several outposts throughout the country during Easter week. It was launched by Irish Republicans to end British rule in Ireland. Although the first major demonstration of force since the 1798 uprising by the United Irishmen, it was however a military failure and was swiftly defeated by the British. Its lasting legacy was that due to adverse public reaction to the violent British response, it turned the Irish people away from the idea of Home Rule and towards the concept of a fully independent Irish Republic.

Dropped Stitches and Missing Threads

For the purposes of this research, I am very aware and conscious of all those whose stories are not unfolded or untangled during the course of this research, so many communities within community which I have not specifically identified. One such grouping is the 'new Irish' who have come to our land, particularly in the more recent decades, reaching a peak during the boom years of the late 90's and early noughties. While Ireland has always had an influx of strangers and new blood over the generations and centuries, most if not all of whom were of the 'uninvited' kind, these newer arrivals have done much not just to enhance the economy and provide diversity to our homogenous gene pool, but have helped us to appreciate and not shy away from using our native language and to celebrate our unique culture. However their stories and experiences, which I am sure could be fascinating, colourful, challenging and intriguing to tell, are not for this particular research at this time, though it is certainly an area which I hope to visit in future.

Other voices which I was keen to explore were those who had moved back to Ireland from abroad; what brought them back, why they have remained here, and narrating their experiences of inclusion and exclusion, the dichotomy of having Irish relatives yet with different accents and often, a very different educational experience, being neither fish nor fowl. However this exploration of the shifting issues of identity and place within Ireland which would have been of great interest to me, was not possible to include within the confines of what I had set out to do at the outset of this dissertation. So this will have to wait for another voyage, another exploration.

As I compiled and gathered into the fold the various voices and threads of stories, in earlier drafts, I became very aware that with the exception of my own voice, all the others were those of the men from within the family. The women's voices were notably absent yet I heard them clearly in my head as I wrote. Contrary to the

prevailing norms and trends for longevity and life expectancy, the women in my family have not lived as long nor survived as well as the men, many of whom lived long into their 10th decade on both sides. Also there are more uncles, granduncles, male cousins, than female in all the generations. Even at that, as I probe and dig, I wonder is it because of the recent passing of my own mother that I was unwilling or unable to explore their voices and talk with the women in my family. Was the absence of that one voice, so strong and influential a tone in my life up to now, too vast a silence amidst the boom of the dominant male voices? Was it because the stories of the men seem to sparkle more with adventure and excitement, with the outdoors and of new horizons, than those of my female relatives, who most likely were confined mainly to households and farmsteads, anchored with childbearing and childrearing and the myriad tasks of daily toil and living? This observation in later drafts played on my mind and kept niggling at me as I wrote my way through this research. The absence of women's voices highlighted some significant gaps for me and raised some pertinent questions such as, the place of women in Irish culture and society, and the role of gender and place in this exploration of community and belonging, which I have attempted to address briefly in chapter 2. So although I must acknowledge that the women in my family were not represented in these stories initially, I heard them muttering, tutting, cajoling and chuckling in the background and I could silence them no longer. Initially, I was drawn to write my maternal grandmother's voice and to represent her story, but somehow, it was my mother's voice which emerged and therefore allowed me to interlink tiny fragments of my grandmother's story. A flavour of her experiences as a child growing up in the 1940's and 50's and her later musings as a young working woman in London and a wife in 1960's Ireland is touched upon in chapter 6. I dedicate this work to their memories and hope that I have done them justice.

If we focus too hard on what we want to say and how we want to say it, the page of the screen may remain stubbornly blank, or words may appear but refuse to come alive or convey what we want them to. Only when we stop trying and become absorbed in

the work, when we *lose ourselves* in the writing, does the process begin in earnest. (Hunt and Sampson 2006, p. 1)

Now I may begin, in earnest.

The following chapters will venture into the borderland territories of community, and explore in a comprehensive manner what is the broad understanding of community and probe into our perception of what it is to belong. This will be undertaken particularly through a review of the relevant literature, which will also delve into the deeper meaning of what we mean by home and our identity with a culture of place. Through the stories, the tension between being a stranger, an outsider, the space between 'us' and 'them', between conforming and not conforming, is explored. The influence of Church and power are also teased out, and finally, I will discuss the journey that has been taken and reflect on where it has brought us to in terms of our understanding and appreciation of belonging.

Chapter 2

Threading the Loom

Much like a chef outlining her ideas for a banquet, finding what ingredients are available and in season and what may need to be foraged or brought in from afar, the formulation of the menu, which may or may not need to be amended depending on what culinary disaster may befall during the course of the preparations, I now feel ready to open the cookbooks and peruse some interesting recipes from wise and experienced practitioners. The various techniques applied to prepare the repast, such as, the peeling, skinning, chopping, blending, marinating; the equipment needed to beat, whisk, knead, baste, chill, and cook; the platters and cutlery for presenting and savouring the completed meal will all be outlined in the following chapter.

Amid all the clatter and bustle, the following chapter draws on some of the strategic theoretical texts which I have explored during the course of our journey. The various strands researched, which have already stretched my own understanding and preconceived notions of the broad theme, much like a piece of pastry being rolled out, flexing and yielding on the cold slab, are quite diverse. These include; an exploration of fundamental human needs; looking at definitions of community and home; probing into areas concerning gender and power and the significance of this discussion in relation to community; relationships of love, care and solidarity; consideration of issues such as culture and identity; reflection on matters pertaining to inclusion and exclusion, and journeying along pathways where we consider themes of place, memory and ultimately, of belonging.

As Brewer and Caporael (1995) noted, humans are inherently social creatures who gather in groups the world over. According to Pagel (2012), we are devoted to small societies, co-operating with others inside of them. At a psychological level, we display forms of social behaviour conducive to living in small group, such as rewarding co-operation, punishing those who deviate from norms, and being wary of outsiders. Indeed, the need to belong, a need fulfilled only through affiliation

with and acceptance from others, is so universally powerful that it has been proposed to be as basic to our psychological makeup as hunger or thirst is to our physical makeup (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). A first step into this sprawling and multifaceted entity will begin to explore broad concepts of community and start to pin down the essential elements required by humans to belong in community and society. As the chapter progresses, I review some of the theorists and authors whom I have drawn from on the panoramic journey across this particular landscape.

What do we as Humans need?

Maslow (1954) is an obvious launching point with the basic hierarchy of human needs. Any practitioners working in the field of adult learning or further education would most likely have used this theory at some stage, to help explain the various stages that we as humans need to experience in order to manoeuvre our way towards self-actualisation and ultimately to achieving personal fulfilment. His premise which is based on a very culturally specific and individualistic approach, has been taken up by later theorists such as Max Neef (1991), who have expanded it to investigate human well-being, happiness and quality of life matters in a more inclusive and complex fashion. The question of what makes us human is one which has invaded nearly every aspect of our lives, our psychology and our behaviour, and forms the great themes of literature, theology and philosophy. For some the answer lies in the mystery of our consciousness, our morality, our capacity for shame, kindness or empathy. For others, it is in the fact that we have language, free will, can take responsibility for our actions, or that we possess a soul (Pagel 2012). Furthering the question Lukes poses in his 2005 publication, what therefore are the necessary conditions for human beings to flourish or to live in a truly human way? This question asks for an account of the social and material circumstances which must exist in order

To enable people to live lives that meet certain normative standards; lives fit for human beings, who are treated and treat

one another as ends (sic), have equal dignity and an equal entitlement to shape their own lives, making their own choices and developing their gifts in reciprocal relations with others. (Lukes, 2005, p. 117)

The most promising attempt at a response to this query has been developed in slightly differing formats, by Sen (1985, 1992, 2004) and Nussbaum (2000). The 'capabilities approach' which they proffer, outlines that certain functions are particularly central to human life and that their presence or absence is typically understood to be an indicator of the presence or absence of human life, and that these have a cross cultural consensus. Following the Aristotlean view that humans are distinguishable from animals in being self-directed, shaping our lives in cooperation and reciprocity with others rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in the manner of a flock or herd, Nussbaum says that a human life "is distinctively human by virtue of practical reason and sociability" (Nussbaum in Lukes, 2005, p. 118). I return to this approach in the analysis and interpretation of the stories when I explore what happens when the power of some protagonists affects the interests of others by restricting their capabilities for fully human functioning. This, I contend, constitutes a core element of dis-enabling us as humans to participate in a meaningful way within our communities and to be empowered to feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. Observing the connections, if any, between these elements and the experiences of those whose stories are revealed throughout this research, comprises a substantial part of the interpretation and discussion in chapter 7, particularly pages 141 and 147.

Community as a concept

What do we mean when we talk about community? McMillan and Chavis (1986) discuss a number of predictors which create a sense of community including membership, influence, reinforcement and a shared emotional connection. Bauman (2001) sees community as a place imbuing a sense of belonging, warmth

and companionship. Ledwith (2011) describes how personal narrative and personal reflection can be used as a tool for collective change in community and on how we need to be more open to others in listening to and telling our stories. I am strongly drawn to her thinking, particularly in relation to the potential of stories to give voice to experience and in turn, providing a structure for reflection on the world. It is the insight gained from this reflection which helps to develop one's own personal autonomy, thus revealing the political nature of personal experience which can ultimately lead to critical consciousness and critical action (Ledwith, 2005). This is explored more fully in chapter 7. Others including Antonsich (2010) emerged through all the sifting and searching for relevant material with discussions on hegemonic forms of citizenship, a sense of rootedness, and identity in transition.

At this stage an attempt at trying to pull some strands of what community could be defined as, may be useful. It is notable that within the various fields of academia, practitioners are divided on their use of the term 'community'. Sociologists have traditionally assigned it to a particular form of social organisation based on small groups, such as neighbourhoods, small towns or spatially bounded localities. Anthropologists have designated it to culturally defined groups. Other usages refer to political community, emphasising citizenship, self-government, civil society and collective identity. Philosophical and historical studies focus more on the notion of community as an ideology or utopia (Delanty, 2010). Cohen (1985) argues that community should be understood as a symbolic structure rather than as a social practice, shifting the emphasis from the previous focus on community as a form of social interaction based on locality, to a concern with meaning and identity. Anderson's book on *Imaginary Communities* (Anderson, 1983) reflected this generally cultural approach, though he showed that community is shaped by cognitive and symbolic structures which are not underpinned by lived spaces and social intimacy. This seems to have led to a view of community as shaped by what separates and divides people rather than by what they have in common, and causing critics to want to reinsert the social into community, and to recover the sense of place which was shifted by the cultural turn in the theory of community

(Delanty, 2010). This initial scratching at the ground shows that community has a variable nature and cannot be equated with a place or a particular group.

Delving further into the realm of understanding community, I return again briefly to the ideas and theories of McMillan and Chavis (1986), where they describe a process which identifies various elements which work together to produce an experience of a sense of community. They ascertained that the strongest predictors of actual sense of community included length of community residency, satisfaction with the community and the number of neighbours one could identify on a first name basis. A positive relationship was also found between a sense of community and the ability to function competently within the community. Barr and Hashagen (2000) describe communities as a sum of personal and interpersonal relationships and expound on how within a well-functioning community,

that these will be well established and functional and a critical part of how the community actually works (2000, p. 56).

These findings of social bonding, neighbourhood attachment and behavioural rootedness are also reflected in the work of Riger and Lavrakas (1981). That sense of rootedness is also discussed by Lovell (1998), Morley (2001) and Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2004), and to me, is one of the key elements of our discussion and exploration on identity and belonging.

Furthermore Bachrach and Zautra (1985), while studying the coping responses to a proposed hazardous waste facility in a rural community, noted that a stronger sense of community led to problem-focused coping behaviours, which attempted directly to alter or counter the threat. A path analytic model showed that problem-focused coping contributed strongly to the level of one's community involvement (e.g., reading reports, attending meetings, signing petitions), and the authors concluded that a stronger sense of community may lead to a greater sense of purpose and perceived control in dealing with an external threat. In a similar study, Chavis, Stucky and Wandersman (1983) identified the process of empowerment,

which occurs through the development of community. A brief sense of community scale was used, again by Bachrach and Zautra based on questions developed by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974). This measure included seven items; feeling at home in the community, satisfaction with the community, agreement with the values and beliefs of the community, feeling of belonging in the community, interest in what goes on in the community, feeling an important part of the community, and attachment to the community.

Conformity and Inclusion

The tensions between solidarity and division are reflective of the complexities of belonging at a time when social, cultural and ethnic diversity feature prominently. Identification with a group or community plays a substantial role in the constitution of identity and creating a sense of belonging, built by constantly recognising and modifying the shifting boundaries of that group or community. Conformity and following rules are normal when joining a community, such as a nation or church, in order for a sense of solidarity to emerge and flourish, thus becoming the identity of the collective. This often involves a handing over, or at least a diminution of self-freedom, in exchange for the security of the group (Guibernau, 2013). So for example, for the majority of those who were transplanted from the west of Ireland to Rath Carn in Co. Meath, they came broadly speaking, from the same part of Connemara, in rural western Ireland, and moved more or less within a few months of each other in large family groups. Therefore it was comparable to moving a whole village en masse to a new geographical region, maintaining their language and culture as it had been previously. Conformity and integration were not as significant an issue for this large group. Whereas with other individual families who were transplanted, such as Séamus's family, they were the only ones to be relocated to this part of the south Meath area, and therefore fitting in to the established community there or being excluded, were their only options. Returning to their native place was a route they could no longer take, as their home and few acres of land had been redistributed among their former neighbours.

Culture

As mentioned briefly at the start of this chapter, Max Neef (1991) constructed a taxonomy of human needs based on axiological categories, which is similar to Maslow but without the hierarchy. His proposed praxis for Human Scale Development is based on three pillars; namely, human needs, self-reliance and organic articulations. These include subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, recreation, creation, identity and freedom. He says that human nature is defined by this system of human needs which have to be satisfied throughout our lives in order for us to grow as authentic humans. These interact with existential satisfiers of being, having, doing and interacting.

Arising from this structure, he states that firstly, fundamental human needs are finite, few and classifiable; and secondly, fundamental human needs are the same in all cultures and in all historical periods. The only changes through time and through cultures, are the ways or the means by which the needs are satisfied. Different cultures offer a blend of satisfiers for the system of fundamental human needs and their quality has to be judged by their capacity for allowing human fulfilment. It is this distinctive feature, our unique capacity for culture, which according to Pagel (2012), distinguishes us from other species. He outlines the evolution of our capacity for culture, which grew from humans living in larger tribal societies, in which people worked together. From this, customs and systems beliefs arose, ideas, skills and technologies were shared, languages evolved, and dance, music and art were created. Humankind had discovered culture. As humans, we can produce distinct cultures based on shared beliefs, knowledge, skills, language and religions. Pagel says that our capacity for culture means that ideas jump from one mind to another, building on what has been generated previously, thus creating a new sphere of evolution, the sphere of evolving ideas, in a process of cumulative cultural adaption (Pagel, 2012). He further adds that collections of people working together are not unlike ants or termites, cooperating to promote and maintain a structure essential to their survival and prosperity.

At the same time, we also have a dual moral nature, capable of kindness which we can abandon in an instant if we feel threatened, particularly by those from outside of our tribe or community. This is demonstrated in our tendencies to be wary of strangers, in our xenophobia, bigotry, or through extreme acts of violence in war. Pagel (2012) notes that other unique features of human psychology, including norms and morality, our expectation of equality and fair-mindedness, our propensity towards 'moralistic aggression' punishing those who violate social rules, are emotions and social mechanisms which we developed to regulate those who may be tempted to exploit our fragile cooperative cultural systems. Further to this list of features, I would include the concept of power and the execution of control and power which underlies many of our human transactions. This encompasses, for the purposes of this research, power over who is in and who is out. In other words, the power to include or exclude, power over those who cross the boundaries of social norms, the power to create, impose and instigate those norms and rules in the first instance, and the capacity of power as domination to impede others from flourishing and living to their full capacity within their community. It is this notion and discussion on culture which leads us to another aspect which I want to thread into the tapestry, and link with the concept of power in how it relates to the exploration into belonging and community.

Power

Lukes has written extensively and contributed to the debate among American political scientists and sociologists on power, particularly concentrating on how to think about power theoretically and how to study it empirically. The question of powerlessness and domination lies at the heart of his 2005 publication 'Power: A Radical View' which he has revisited since his 1974 edition. While it is very indepth and challenging, and contains elements which have been argued and contradicted in the intervening years, for the purposes of this research, I want to just touch briefly on his concept of domination and power, and particularly on how it can adversely affect a person's view of themselves and their place in society. Lukes' main

contention is that relations of power, particularly those involving domination, are exercised by keeping the powerless unaware of their 'real interests'. Furthermore he articulates claims that people's wants may themselves be the product of a system that works against their interests. Without going into the complications of his discussions on the various conceptions of interests, a key question he posits is how the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate or, how is willing compliance to domination secured? Importantly, he cites Wartenberg's 1990 study which distinguishes between the power to demean, or 'power over', and beneficent power. Wartenberg (1990) differentiates between this form of paternalistic power, such as where one agent in wanting to protect or promote some benefit to another, may act against the other's current wants or inclinations, therefore limiting the other's freedom to act, and other forms of beneficent power which he calls transformative. He describes this as the productive, transformative and authoritative power that is compatible with dignity, and offers examples such as that of a mother, teacher, therapist, orchestral conductor, within the army or in sports coaching, thus placing some value in being subject to power (Wartenberg in Lukes, 2005). However a contrary view put forward by Sennett (2003) makes a different case, arguing that there is no situation in adulthood where dependency is not demeaning and inherently shameful. Whichever way we look at the concept of power,

we may conclude that power as domination is the ability to constrain the choices of others, coercing them or securing their compliance, by impeding them from living as their own nature and judgement dictate (Lukes, 2005, p. 85).

He further notes that domination can provoke and maintain people's internal limitations on self-determination, both in the way it can demoralise and distort their self-confidence, and in undermining their judgement as to how best to advance their interests and achieve self-fulfilment. This can induce what Pettit described as having to live at the mercy of another in a manner that leaves one vulnerable to some ill that the other is in a position to arbitrarily impose (Pettit,

1997). The words of Du Bois encapsulate for me the main thrust of this particular theme, and illuminate the threads which materialise within some of the stories in this dissertation, - the feelings of being disapproved of by others, the pervading consciousness of not being good enough, the perceptions of being an outsider, - when he describes

this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (Du Bois, 1969, p. 45).

These sentiments emerge and surface from the underbelly of several of the stories recounted later in the research, for example, in aspects of my own stories and in those of Paddy and Séamus in their recollections of being displaced and in the pervading sense of being held under the hasp of a power which was primarily controlled and overseen by external forces. This is also notable in the recollections within the Mother story, where there was a sense throughout her life, and throughout the life of her mother again, of constantly being viewed and monitored, scrutinised and criticised by family, by society, and always within the gaze of the overseeing eye of the dominant Catholic Church. The power of the Church over the majority of Irish inhabitants cannot be underestimated, as noted by Fahey (2007) and Inglis (1998), and its strength and potency persisted unabated and uncontested until, arguably, the latter end of the previous century. The power to exclude or include, particularly in relation to the influence of the Church in Irish life, weaves into the following discussion on being on the outside.

Conformity and Exclusion: Breaching Walls and Fences

Much of social psychology literature is dedicated to people's need to conform to the groups they belong to for fear of exclusion and inferiorisation (Billig, 1976; Tajfel, 1982; Abrams, Hogg, and Marques, 2005). Twenge and Baumeister (2005) explain that social exclusion is bad for humans, both psychologically and materially,

and for the community in which they live, creating conditions which can give rise to increased inequality, conflict and mistrust. If the desire to belong in community and society is a fundamental aspect to human life, then it is to be expected that someone who has been rejected in a relationship or left isolated within society could set in train a dynamic of aggression, anger, defensiveness, depression and a shutting off of emotional responses.

If we take as a starting point the premise of Abrams et al. (2005), that social life is played out within a framework of relationships within which people seek inclusion and belonging, then we must make the assumption that these relationships necessarily include people and also by default, have boundaries that by definition, exclude people. They make the observation that frequently these boundaries can be challenged or crossed, for example the makeup of a family can change due to birth, death, marriage or divorce; schools can gain or lose new members through age and time; sports teams select or exclude new members in relation to their ability and performance; and at a macro social level, societies can attract or repel individuals based on ethnicity, race, occupation or other status (2005). They observe that political and cultural alliances can also form the basis for the inclusion or exclusion of whole sections of the global population, as noted by Lukes and others in the previous section on the context of power. Much of our social and media lives are taken up with who is in and who is out of fashion or on the front pages of the tabloids and magazines, 'what's hot' and 'what's not' currently, and the airwaves hum with discussions on how we feel about it all. In addition, Abrams et al. point out that our obsession with walls, fences and moats, is a physical manifestation of our desire to manage inclusion and exclusion. While sometimes diversity and exclusion could be considered to be positive in that they provide valued distinctiveness and uniqueness, on the other hand, being separated from others may be aversive, particularly when this is imposed from power sources external to the individual or group. They further posit that exclusion can be voluntary and consensual, and give the example of doctors and nurses, academic

and cleaning staff dining separately, or when people leave relationships, retire or move location. However, whether consensual or not, the outcomes of exclusion may often vary in terms of the consequences for conformity and towards building a more stable, egalitarian and progressive society (Abrams et al, 2005).

The Collar and the Crucifix – influence of Church

The dominance of the Church in Irish society has had a huge influence over the political and social trajectory of Irish society since the acquiescence of British governments during the nineteenth century (Inglis, 1998; Fahey, 2007). This continued throughout the early days of the Irish Republic when the Irish Free State allowed the Catholic Church to dominate over moral and welfare matters, and it remained a potent force as the main non-state provider of a range of education provision, health care, and many social services until its power diminished towards the end of the last century. This transfer of allegiance, where we appeared to replace one form of colonialism with another in the form of a collar and crucifix, clearly demonstrates this desire for conformity and a longing to fit in to society. There are many examples in Irish social history and literature of this yearning to fit in, for example John B. Keane in his courageous and enlightening book, *The Bodhrán Makers* (1986) where a small group of the villagers tried, and succeeded in holding a 'house dance' against the express command of the Church in Ireland, and particularly enforced by the local parish priest, the ultraconservative Canon Tett. However the aftermath of the event sees these people having to leave their parish and community, where the defiance of a few was outnumbered by the fear and intimidation exercised by the majority. This reach of power, spreading its tentacles to even these simple social pleasures which had previously been occasions of great community celebration and conviviality, where neighbours from miles around would gather to play music, sing songs and dance until it was time to go home and milk the cows, were now perceived by the Church as highly probable opportunities for sin. Therefore in the interests of maintaining decorum and in wanting to curtail any prospects of unseemly and ungodly behaviour which may be

afforded by such displays of revelry, the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935 was enacted. This ensured that it was illegal to hold a house dance in a private house, and instead dances were held in a controlled and commercialised environment. Even the act of dancing itself was affected. This had traditionally been a raucous and flamboyant affair, with arms akimbo and legs flung hither and thither fluidly tapping out the steps. In an era of strict social mores, the grabbing and touching which was inevitable with such exuberance was frowned upon, and gradually Irish dancing became the regimental stiff upper body poise, with rigid and puppet like movement which exists to this day. My father also tells the story of his uncle Tom, a silent towering giant of a man, who was 'read off the altar' by the priest for daring to play music at a dance with his Protestant neighbour. The rule of the church went so far as to threaten excommunication on any Catholic who entered a Protestant church, even for the funeral of a neighbour. Along with the 'Ne Temere' decree of 1907, which enforced restrictions on mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants, these actions combined to create a divisive and destructive rupture between neighbours and within communities, giving rise to clear divisions between 'them' and 'us' and between those who were obedient and compliant, and those who strayed outside of the boundaries of acceptable and decent god-fearing behaviour (Walsh, 2015).

In chapters 4, 5 and 6, we delve into some stories where 'outsider' behaviour is portrayed to varying degrees. The example of Paddy 'The Kid' Casey from when he left his home place, all through the time he was away from home and even when he returned, how that all pervading sense of being outside and no longer feeling a part of the place from where he had originated permeated his remaining adult life. My own story of being a 'blow-in' also represents feelings of being an outsider, of trying to belong in a new community, and of the consequences of deviating outside the perceived boundaries of social and familial behaviour and expectations. The Mother story similarly tells of the fear and anxiety of being perceived to be different, in coming from a family where the parents were separated, at a time in

Irish history when such a situation was publicly uncommon, and frowned upon by a society which operated within the strict confines of a conservative Catholic outlook, particularly in its attitude to women. The story of Séamus's transplantation also contains elements of being on the outside, in terms of moving to an area where his native Irish language was no longer the everyday language, where he knew no one else in the neighbourhood and had no family members around, with the exception of his mother, brother and two of his sisters, and where agriculture rather than fishing became the primary method of making a viable income.

Boundaries and Tradition

An added ingredient to this mix, and extending the discussion slightly on exclusion, is the interesting finding from social psychology research, which has shown that people have boundaries protecting their personal space (Armstrong, 1993; Dixon, 2001). In the words of Foster,

spaces, places and boundaries . . . involve negotiation and renegotiation, including struggles to be included and spaces and places from which we have been excluded (Foster, 1997, p. 9).

Universally, groups use language, dress and ritual to create boundaries to defend against threat and to protect their intimate social connections. This is clearly evidenced in the representations and stories from those who were transplanted from the west of Ireland to Co. Meath, in their retention of their native language, which was a very strong identifying factor for this particular grouping, and the carrying on of their long established traditions and patterns from their home place.

Recognising Identity

Probyn (1996) views identity as being in transition, always producing itself through the combined process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong. When we speak of identities, either individual or collective, according to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), there is some ambivalence as to whether the nature of individuals and groups is objectively given or subjectively and inter-subjectively

constructed. Therefore the very meaning of identity hovers between what is given by one's culture and society, and what is created or constructed, between finding one's true self and creating it, between self-discovery and self-invention, between primordial identification and post-modernist self-fashioning. In other words, one may identify with their ascribed identity, or one may seek to ignore or reject it. Furthermore, if we link in with the earlier discussion on page 22 with Lukes and Nussbaum, I suggest that one could make the claim that accepting one's ascribed identity, or not, is not necessarily voluntary, and that the domination Lukes spoke of, can take several different forms. For example, there is what he calls insufficient recognition, that is, where there is non-recognition or mis-recognition of ethnic, cultural, geographical or religious identities. In addition, there is a view where people can be seen and see themselves, as "irredeemably defined by a fixed and unalterable inferior and dependant status and set of roles from which there is no escape" (Lukes, 2005, p. 119). Nussbaum gives an example of Indian widows who had internalised society's perception of them where their identities were invariably defined by their relationships to men, as daughters, wives, mothers and widows (Nussbaum, 2000). This 'inferior' status is portrayed in chapter 6 where we see it within the 'Mother' story and in the autoethnographical segments, with the perceptions of being a 'blow-in', and the gendered and patriarchal outlook inherent within the narrative.

In trying to draw these and other strands together, McMillan and Chavis (1986) proposed a definition of a sense of community with 4 main elements; these included

- Membership – a sense of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness
- Influence – a sense of mattering, of making a difference to the group and of the group mattering to its members
- Reinforcement – integration and fulfilment of needs
- Shared emotional connection

It is this shared emotional connection and an exploration of issues supported by the bedrock of equality and egalitarianism with respect to social, cultural, political and economic affairs, and how they play a fundamental part in underpinning how we address our need to belong which I explore next.

The Idea of Equality

At the very outset of this chapter, I identified that a starting point for this journey into community and belonging commenced with tapping into writers such as Maslow (1969a), Max Neef (1991) and Lukes (2005), and treading onto the pathway into core themes of what it is to be fully human and an exploration of basic human needs. This led into an exploration of ideas of community, conformity and exclusion, culture and power. I feel that the next logical step on this excursion is to now touch into the area of equality, exploring how the fundamental theme of equality lies at the cornerstone of all egalitarian thinking. In doing so, I also wish to tease out in what way this theme links with some of the threads evolving out of the earlier discussion on power and identity on pages 27 and 34 respectively.

Basic equality is the cornerstone of all egalitarian thinking, and the fundamental touchstone underpinning this concept is the idea or belief that “all human beings have equal worth and importance and are therefore equally worthy of concern and respect” (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh, 2009, p. 23). They believe furthermore, that a full egalitarian society would, for example, see the elimination of poverty and a certain level of commitment towards the satisfaction of some basic human needs. The authors state that material inequality makes up only some of the important inequalities experienced in industrialised countries and in the world as a whole, and that such disparities in relation to respect and recognition, and in the relative status of members of different groups, are expressed in different ways. These inequalities can be observed in the relationships between women and men, currently very

topical in the entertainment industry with the 'Time's Up'⁸ and 'Me Too' campaigns taking fire, and the ways in which dominant groups treat the disabled, ethnic minorities, working class people, and people of different sexual orientation. Baker and his co-authors also point out that individuals and groups vary considerably in the access they have in relation to love, care and solidarity and the converse relationship to abuse and violence, and that such inequalities are connected to inequalities of power. Furthermore, the relations of dominance and subordination are typical of many social divisions, including those of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and class, as we saw in the earlier discussions with Lukes and Warburton. Additional inequalities are also visible in opportunities for working and learning, with privileged groups gaining enhanced conditions for successful and satisfying work and better chances of worthwhile learning (Baker et al., 2009, p. 7). While this may appear to be a long winded approach to a central nub of my overall exploration, I feel however that it is important to set out this point in relation to setting the stage for some of the later discussion which evolves from the stories and fragments in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

As is evident in the above overview, there are some obvious patterns which emerge, with some groups being more privileged than others, often as a result of social structures rather than what Baker et al. refer to as the random outcome of individual choices. They further propose a framework for theory and action which encompasses different approaches to equality. This framework distinguishes between three different conceptions of equality, namely, basic equality, liberal egalitarianism and equality of condition, explaining that

basic equality is the idea that every human being deserves some basic minimum of concern and respect, placing at least some limits on what it is to treat someone as a human being. Liberal egalitarians hold a wide range of views, but they typically assume that there will always be major inequalities and that our aim should be to manage these fairly, relying on higher minimum standards and some version of equal opportunity.

⁸ A campaign initiated in Hollywood as a lashback against recent, but not new, revelations of sexual harassment and misconduct against women, and also highlighting gender inequality and respect for women in the workplace as other major themes.

Equality of condition sets out a much more ambitious aim, to eliminate major inequalities altogether, or at least massively to reduce the current scale of inequality (Baker et al., 2009, p. 23).

In relation to these three conceptions, they highlight five key dimensions of equality which include i) respect and recognition; ii) resources; iii) love, care and solidarity; iv) power; v) working and learning. These concepts correlate to a great degree with the threads I started to unravel at the outset of this chapter, when I started the journey into what we as humans need to flourish and belong within our communities. If we wish to get a sense of the central sets of relationships that structure people's lives and in particular, account for the inequalities between them, then a brief glance at its social systems is one way of achieving that aim.

When concentrating on the four central systems - economic, cultural, political and affective, all of which are intertwined at many levels, both conceptually and empirically, it is evident that the affective system of social relations has been relatively neglected by social scientists. It was only when feminist scholars such as Bubeck (1995), Hobson (2000) and Nussbaum (1995b) began to highlight the importance of care and love work within the lives of women that the affective domain began to be addressed.

The affective system is essentially concerned with providing and sustaining relationships of love, care and solidarity, which we noted above. Baker et al. point out that the key institutions for providing love and care are families, although these relationships are also sustained by networks of friendship, by schools and through care home environments. The issues of care and of the emotional work which lies beneath, reinforcing it, are of increasing importance in the quality of life debate internationally. Yet affective relationships have been put under increasing pressure by a range of economic and demographic developments, for example, the casualisation of employment with zero contract hours, the relative powerlessness of organised labour to protect workers' care interests in a globalised market order,

global migration, and the increased commodification of the work involved in love and care. There is also a negative historic association of care and love work with the oppression of women, both in the unequal and gendered division of such labour within the private domain, and in the institutionalisation of care work as low paid women's work in the private domain (Baker et al., 2009). We can see that while emotional work, particularly the emotional work involved in building and maintaining relationships of caring, loving and solidarity is central to human existence, it was not recognised as such until it was politically problematised by feminists at the end of the last century, for these very reasons (Bubeck, 1995; Lynch and McLaughlin, 1995; Connolly, 2001). There is a recognition by Baker et al. (2009), that having the time to care and be cared for, in work, in one's personal life, and in one's societal alliances, is essential for the well-being of all human beings and that life is lived through the medium of relations with others and through the varying attachments that we create. Therefore if we acknowledge all the systems noted on page 37, the economic, cultural, political, and affective, then the emotional work, the love and care work that is central to this field, is a political matter. Consequently we can see equality, particularly equality of affection, as a pivotal concept underlying human life and interactions, and importantly, in articulating progressive political ideals and how it can be an organising principle for both theory and action. It is this theme which I contest is one of the most significant hooks on which I hang my research and one which we will return to in some more depth, to analyse and discuss in the context of the stories which follow in later chapters.

So far we have explored some of the more fundamental structures underpinning this research which have included; human needs, community, power, equality, identity, inclusion and exclusion. The final section of this chapter takes a look at themes of landscape, memory and home.

The Rocks and The Fields

Landscape is important in the context of framing people's sense of place and community. The land, and ownership of land has a particular resonance in the Irish psyche, stemming from centuries when it was not possible to own land or property, and the majority of peasants farmed the land as tenants. A place is a socially meaningful and identifiable space to which a historical dimension is attributed. According to Delanty (2010), community refers to sets of people who may identify themselves with a place or places in terms of notions of commonality, shared values or solidarity in particular contexts. Guibernau's (2013) thinking is consistent with this idea, and she notes that people also come to regard the landscape as embodying the traditions, history and culture of the nation they share with their ancestors, and whether urban or rural, it also represents the heritage that is bequeathed for future generations. Landscape is thus a contextual horizon of perceptions, providing both a foreground and a background in which people feel themselves to be living in their world. In terms of identity, there are some crucial elements at work, namely memory and place. The idea of landscape grants a flexibility to the concepts of identity and belonging through individual historical experience. For example, home and place can be seen as fixed points from one viewpoint, while on the other hand, movement and travel can also provide the feeling of being 'at home'. Stewart and Strathern (2003) suggest that people travel with their own inner landscape, and remember places through images, feeling what it was like to be there, reminiscing through senses such as smell and sound, or can develop images through photographs, films or narratives from others. Thus they are creating landscapes to which they have a connection and such landscapes can travel with people, giving them a sense of home when they are not at home. This deep connection with the landscape was revealed to me on a recent trip back to my father's home place in Co. Clare, where he was able to point out a particular stone he used to stand on as a boy on sunny Summer mornings to warm his feet. Or to show me where he helped to build a stand for the milk churns on the side of the road, which is now a feature of the road to Corofin, his local village. "I'll meet

ye at the stand at Marrinan's cross" became a phrase which would have featured in the vernacular of the locals in the era before motorised transport was common in the area.

In a story which will feature in Chapter 4, my father also speaks wistfully of his memories of his grandfather, a man who left his own community and home at the age of 19 for Australia. His descriptions and stories of the landscape there were so vivid and detailed, that on his own journey there in the early 1970's, my father recalled that he almost felt that he had been there before, and had walked every step of the ground with his grandfather through his stories. A further explication of his story also gives an insight into the fierce and often irrational passion for the land and the indomitable clinging to it.

Ah It's well I remember . . . The Place of Memory and Nostalgia

We all return to memories and dreams like this, again and again; the story we tell of our own life is reshaped around them. But the point doesn't lie there, back in the past, back in the lost time at which they happened; the only point lies in interpretation (Steedman, 1986, p. 6).

As the mother of all the Muses, according to the ancient Greeks, memory, along with invention and imagination, are inextricably entwined and utterly depend on remembering. This thread is intrinsic to drawing together and tethering some of the fragments which emerge and take shape within the stories in later chapters. Therefore in a journey through the geography of belonging which has taken us down pathways exploring community, human needs, power, exclusion, and equality, meandered down trails into conformity, identity, culture, and landscape, before we approach the gateway to the final theme of 'home', it is impossible not to conclude without peering briefly into the realm of 'memory' and its association with time and place. I have looked at the strand of thought teased out in the previous section by Delanty (2010), when he discusses the critical notions of identity also being associated with memory. Along with hooks (1991), Massey states that

remembering and memories of the traditional can be important for illuminating and transforming the present (hooks, 1991; Massey, 1992). Eakin expands on this further and says of memory that it is rainbow experience which we have almost lost but of which we occasionally retrieve a brilliant glimpse. Furthermore, he adds that something of the reality of that moment in time survives the destructive weight of wisdom and rationality (Eakin, 1999). In his exploration of history, representation and memory, Walder (2011) makes a very interesting point about the social desire that prompts the search for remembered times and places. He discusses its metamorphosis into nostalgia, which is usually thought of in terms of affectionate longing and desire for a lost home, place or time, that twilight zone between history and memory, and its representation in the present as a "place marked by the trail of survivors searching for their roots, for a home, in the ruins of history" (2011, p. 2). This zone may vary in length, as will the obscurity and fuzziness that characterises it, but it is this no-man's land of time and the wistful, longing, reminiscent strands of memory ephemerally floating within it which is difficult to grasp. There is a temptation to wrap notions of nostalgia with sentimentality, and it is important to regard the words of Mazzucchelli, (2009) that every memory is a recreation, not a playback. This brings the image of Albus Dumbledore's 'pensieve' to mind. This is where the wizard extracts his memories with the tip of his wand and stores them in glass receptacles, using the font or 'pensieve' as a sort of microscope or reflective tool in order to make sense of them and to explore them in greater detail (Rowling, 2006).

Home - Níl aon Tinteán mar do Thinteáin féin

(There's no hearth like your own)

"The property". How alien that word when applied to what we knew, in all its layered and clouded complexity, simply as home. First world, sufficient and minutely known (Dorgan, 2017, p. 97).

An additional fundamental aspect to this overall exploration into community and belonging, is that of home. The concept of home as a safe place, a haven and refuge has taken on a new poignancy in the 21st century in so many places throughout the world. Global warming, coastal erosion, economic migration, geo-political conflicts are among some of the reasons for the movement of people from their places of origin. Closer to home, a chaotic housing development strategy in the aftermath of the recent recession has left over 9000 people officially homeless in Ireland as of figures released in November 2017 from the Dept. of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, with strong anecdotal evidence of similar numbers who are not on the official list (Focus Ireland, 2017). Home and belonging is something we take for granted and only becomes articulate and formalised when threatened in some way (Fenster, 2004). hooks describes the home space as something which transcends the domestic (1990).

Returning back to the thinking of Max Neef, Tucker (1994) suggests that most people spend their lives in search of a home, somewhere they would be fully able to realise their potential and be fulfilled. Massey (1992, 1994) states that there is no single authenticity or unique eternal truth of an actual or remembered place or home. She says that place is constituted by the particular social relations that occur in a specific location, the social affects that arise in this interaction and its positive interrelations with elsewhere or outside (1992, p. 13). This raises the notion therefore that place is in flux or provisional and boundaries of place and home are permeable and unstable. The identity and meaning of a place must be constructed and negotiated. These themes are also strongly linked with issues of memory and nostalgia, which we have already discussed on page 40, motifs which emerge in several later stories.

Somerville (1992) further postulates a provisional, conceptual construction of the meaning of home. He identifies a number of key signifiers of home including shelter, hearth, privacy, roots, abode and (possibly) paradise. In this context, shelter refers to the physical structure or dwelling place that offers protection. This

contrasts with a very minimalist notion of home as abode – a place, however unstable, where one can stay. Where hearth refers to a welcoming, warm, and relaxing physical environment, heart refers to a loving, supportive, secure and stable environment that provides emotional and physical well-being. Home as privacy means a space where one has the capacity to establish and control personal boundaries. The expression 'roots' denotes home as a source of identity and meaning in the world and finally paradise refers to a constellation of positive idealised notions of home, evident in but not confined to the other key signifiers (Somerville, 1992).

Home typically encompasses a house or dwelling, and birth family or family of origin. For nomadic people however, home is not just where one hails from, but where one has camped, sojourned and lived during the course of a lifetime (White and Jackson, 1995). Cultural studies and anthropological literature which give accounts of the experience of migrants and refugees as well as sociological and psychological empirical research on family formation and home leaving, claim that ideas about staying, leaving and journeying are intrinsically associated with notions of home. Scholars of migration have concentrated on the creative re-appropriation of place, leading to the decoupling of locality from territory (Kennedy and Roudometof, 2002). According to Appadurai (1995), locality has become relational and contextual, comprising of discourse, narrative and imagination as a nostalgic and fictive anchor in a sea of movement. This new transnational reality is where local reflects a bricolage of meanings that underscore a migrant's complex loyalties. Therefore home is neither here nor there, rather it is a hybrid, it is both here and there (Bammer, 1992). I would side with the ideas of Bammer in the case of those migrants from the west of Ireland who were trying to recreate their place of origin in counties like Meath and other neighbouring counties from the 1930's onwards. Their experience reflects that dichotomy, particularly among those who came from the Gaeltacht or native Irish speaking areas, by bringing their language and culture to a more anglicised setting. Their challenges in settling in with neighbours for a generation or so while trying to put down roots, and the strong feeling of

belonging still in the west, particularly while close family members were still living there, is explored more fully in chapter 5.

Therefore, as such, home, be it defined as a dwelling, homeland, or a constellation of relationships, is a realm from which people venture into the world, and to which they generally hope to return (Case, 1996). Closely linking with hooks (1991), Ginsberg (1999) says that home is less about where you are from and more about where you are going. The words of Theo Dorgan beautifully encapsulate much of this exploration on home when he muses over his own place of origin, saying that

Home is where you start out into the world from; you are never truly completely there, you never leave. But you do, you are always leaving, leaving . . . but somehow there is never a sure 'there' to leave. That house, that vivid and actual house that I never fully and truly live in, not then, not now, not ever again, not ever (Dorgan, 2017, p. 103).

In the following chapter, in explaining the rationale for the methodological approach taken in this research, I inquire into the role of the researcher in the interpretivist paradigm, the main tenet of which is that research can never be objectively observed from the outside, rather it must be observed from inside through the direct experience of the people involved. In a reference to Dewey, Abrahams (1985) observes that life is not an uninterrupted flow, and instead is a thing of histories, each with their own plot and movement. I will present the various approaches taken throughout the course of the fieldwork and attempt to justify these interruptions and stories in the context of the overall methodology, while setting the scene for the processes and practices engaged with during the research.

Chapter 3

Unfolding the Map – Exploring the Methodology and Methods

The whole point of stories is not 'solutions or 'resolutions' but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles (Ellis, 1995, p. 30).

Auto-ethnography writes a world in a state of flux and movement – between story and context, writer and reader, crisis and denouement. It creates charged moments of clarity, connection and change (Holman-Jones, 2005, p. 764).

The open ended-interview offers the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another . . . where the researcher and researched offer mutual understanding and support (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997).

So why take the narrative approach in my research? Please bear with me while I expound on the following analogy. It is somewhat evident at this stage that I really love food and cooking. I love talking about food, looking for different ingredients, reading cookbooks, collecting and sharing recipes, experimenting with dishes and obviously, the culmination of it all, tasting and sampling the finished product. There is nothing I enjoy more than bringing in trays of sweet or savoury fare to work to share at breaktime, or to have friends and family over for special occasions to a table laden with a vast selection of delectable dishes. However I am notorious for not following recipes to the exact letter of the law, for taking a look at ingredients and adding or subtracting various items, for constantly tweaking and adjusting the formulas and measurements, and replacing them with a healthier alternative or often, with whatever is in the larder at that particular time. This can have fluctuating degrees of spectacular and surprising success or meet with unmitigated culinary disaster. Often this can depend not only on the ingredients which go into the dishes, but of equal importance is the approach taken to the treatment and care of the constituent elements; of knowing how vigorously to beat

the butter and sugar in order to lighten them for the ideal cake texture; of the temperature required for creating caramel as opposed to toffee; of having a completely spotless bowl in which to whip up frothy stiff egg whites; of knowing how boiling raw ingredients can produce a completely different effect to roasting; or the delicacy required when adding the oil, drop by precious drop while making mayonnaise. These approaches and methods can either enhance or destroy valuable and precious ingredients. Similarly, stories have elements that remain the same, but with telling and retelling, the flavour and meaning may shift and intensify, never remaining quite the same. Schiff, Skillingstead, Archibald, Arasim and Peterson put it well when they say that

the story has a 'script' or 'recipe' that gives the narrative a shape; without certain elements the narrative ceases to be what it is. However, the end result of a recipe is never exactly the same; it is always a slightly different version. Over time and through various settings, elements of narrative structure are preserved while others vary (2006, p. 375).

In much the same way that I outlined the course and rationale for the direction taken with the literature review in chapter 2 in making ready the equipment and utensils which will be used in the preparation of the meal, the purpose and intention of this chapter is to illustrate the methodology and methods employed throughout this research, and to outline how these influence our understanding and interpretation of the data. It is with this thought firmly in mind that I now outline the reasoning for the selection of the narrative approach in this dissertation and why I choose writing as a method of inquiry. I also explain why I was drawn to methods such as autoethnography, dramatized or performative interviewing, and recreating fictional representations of experience as a way of representing data which may otherwise have remained hidden and unexplored. Ethical considerations are also discussed in relation to the various approaches taken in representing the stories.

Narrative Rationale

As I mentioned at the outset of this dissertation, my overwhelming interest lies in the lived experiences of people and in how they have adapted to becoming part of a community. I am also curious about uncovering voices that otherwise would be buried beneath layers of analysis, and disembodied and emotionless accounts. My own previous experiences of undertaking research for community development projects had been disappointing and left me with a sense of deep dissatisfaction. At an empirical level, levels of social exclusion and marginalisation were assessed, recorded and filed into reports, some of which were intended to be used to apply for funding to resource various social projects, others which quite possibly languished on shelves in the local council offices. As part of a research team, I was, reluctantly, undertaking the role of a 'disinterested scientist', an outsider, following the conventional benchmarks of rigour, internal and external validity, reliability and above all, objectivity (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Numbers were crunched, facts were figured and final reports delivered to various bodies. The voices of those I had met on my research journey were rendered inauthentic and muted by the process. It was primarily on the basis of these experiences that I had felt for many years that a continuation of my journey into the deeper realms of academic territory would be fraught with deep potholes, culminating at the end of a long cul-de-sac with the 'big piece of research' like a roadblock. I had reluctantly put away my compass, folded my map and resigned myself to remaining sedentary at the roadside car park.

The only thing which keeps us from floating off with the wind is our stories. They give us a name and put us in a place, allow us to keep on touching (Spanbauer, 1992, p. 190).

For me, the most natural and instinctive way in which to reveal what lies beneath, is through gently questioning and probing, which then emerges as stories and storytelling. Human beings have always told stories and lived out stories from the beginning of time and storytelling is a fundamental aspect of human interaction

and of how we make meaning of our world, building lives and communities (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Barthes argues that narrative has a long history in human experience, and is evident in myth, legend, fable, painting, stone carvings, that it is present in every age, every society (Barthes, 1977). I have always been drawn to stories and storytelling, and though words do not always come easily to me, neither do they flow effortlessly from my reluctant pen, I have always found it to be the most effective and pragmatic way of getting a message across. In my teaching practice with adult learners, explaining a concept through a story or revealing experiences through shared stories, has been a very effective and rewarding practice, and I find myself siding with the ideas of Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), that recounting these lived and told stories is one of the ways through which we fill our world with meaning and engage one another in building lives and communities. As Speedy recounted in her 2005 work, I am seeking to untangle and allow expression of the small stories, the hidden bundles, which may divulge something more of the experiences of people and community. Much like other narrative inquirers who are interested in honouring the ordinary lived experience of themselves and others, my representations are selective, partial, creative and there is always more than can be told in a paragraph, book or dissertation. I agree with Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) when they note that every representation, no matter how faithful to that which it tries to depict, involves selective emphasis of that experience, and I was therefore easily drawn to the narrative genre, and to the intriguing aspect of being able to use stories to carry out social research. I remain stimulated by the terrain, the blurry edges, the challenging and sometimes difficult boundaries of expression, and the beauty and creativity coaxed and indeed welcomed by messy text and thick description, all wonderful ingredients with which to undertake this formidable yet invigorating exploration.

Positioning the Paradigm

My choice of knowledgeable foraging companions for this adventure is varied and comprehensive, and encompasses the breadth of the narrative field. I am drawn to voices such as Polkinghorne (1988), Bruner (1991), Lather (1992) and Niles (2010). I like the way in which Chase sees narrative inquiry as a way of understanding one's own actions and those of others, making connections, seeing consequences and organising events and objects in meaningful ways. As a field in the making, as she views it,

narrative inquiry is rich with diffuse traditions, different methodologies at varying stages and provides ample opportunities for exploring new ideas, methods and questions (Chase, 2005, p. 651).

Sparkes (1997 and 2003) has also stimulated my thinking and understanding of the use of fictional stories and personas as a way of providing insights into absent or silent others. As noted in the introduction, the way in which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) drew on Dewey's (1997) notion of experience for their narrative inquiry methods also particularly appeals to me, and I concur with their premise that

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 20).

So what are the main characteristics for the approach taken in this research? Several different approaches have been labelled by various researchers, for example Mertens (2010), Creswell (2009), Morgan (2007), Holstein and Gubrium (2004), among others. Drawing on the qualities offered by Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2007) in their contrasting approaches to research, namely normative, interpretative

and critical, the compass for this research swings towards the interpretative paradigm. To explain this rationale further, I put forward Mertens (2010) four methodological worldviews for research, which have been adapted and interpreted out of the ideas and thinking of Guba and Lincoln (2005) as well as those of Morgan (2007). She names the paradigms as postpositivism, constructivism, transformative and pragmatic. Narrative, as it is used methodologically, can fit in different spaces on this table based on researcher ontological and epistemological assumptions about experience and stories. My own perspective, after Ryan (2001) and Davies and Davies (2007) would question any unproblematic notion of experience (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Morgan, 2007). Such assumptions would therefore more solidly locate me mainly towards the constructivist paradigm or, as Creswell (2009) also calls it, the interpretivist view, though not exclusively so. The primary tenet of this paradigm is that research cannot be objectively studied from the outside and instead, must be observed and witnessed from the inside, through the direct experiences of people. Therefore the role of the researcher in this model is to understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of the participants (Cohen et al., 2007). Consequently, the analysis of data will mainly involve the interpretation of meaning rather than causes of human actions, taking the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, and where appropriate, symbolic equivalents. However, I am also an adult education practitioner and community activist who feels a resonance with narratives of social justice, inequality, and on the conscious recognition of the oppressive depictions of reality. While I do not explicitly situate myself fully in the transformative paradigm, in the sense that it refers to the discovery and revealing of beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, consciousness raising of oppressive human practices, and understanding the causes of powerlessness, I acknowledge the permeability of the paradigmatic boundaries presented by the transformative approach. I also recognise the shift in boundaries as noted by Mertens (2010), where leaders in the field of qualitative methods are citing the need to situate their work in social justice and would

therefore also veer and edge towards this paradigm in my approach within this dissertation.

This means therefore from an ontological perspective, that my role as researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. In addition, it also stresses the recognition that must be given to factors which privilege one version of reality over the other, such as the influence of social, cultural, political, cultural, ethnic, economic, gender and disability lenses in the construction of reality (Mertens, 2010).

As we noted in the early stages of chapter 1, the methods of data collection are more personal and interactive from an epistemological viewpoint. According to Speedy, this interaction is evident within the spaces created between reader and writer, which extend, provoke and create knowledge in new ways (Speedy, 2008). A strong feature of interpretivism is that it also emphasises constructed realities and rich description. Usher (1996) expands on this description, positing that knowledge within social research is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination, further stating that in order to understand the social world, there is a need to understand and make sense of the meanings that construct and are constructed by interactive human behaviour. This positioning knits in beautifully with the approach taken in later sections of this research where the stories and fragments of experience from the various voices are given life and expression, and where truths are revealed. Cross weaving these concepts with the transformative approach also involves a consciousness of cultural complexities within the relationship between the researcher and the participants, which should reveal more of the unexamined assumptions within the stories and generate greater questioning and reflection (Mertens, 2010). This paradigm also stresses that research is a product of the researcher's own values and cannot be independent of them. In researching and writing about something as personal and integral to oneself as 'belonging', community and home, it is almost impossible to

imagine an alternative or more appropriate approach, and it is appropriate then that the approach taken within this dissertation intertwines elements of both paradigms.

Making Meaning – the Hermeneutic Circle of Interpretation

A significant characteristic of this research is the understanding that knowledge formation is not linear and summative, as per the empirical positivist approach. Usher (1996) defines this feature as the 'hermeneutic circle of interpretation', in that knowledge is cyclical, iterative and spiral in nature, which seeks not to form a complete circle of meaning and finality and instead rolls onwards, continually creating sense and understanding from the interactions between past and present, between researcher and research subjects, between time and place. Thus the central tenet in the hermeneutic/interpretive approach, which has been influential in the general formulation of interpretivism as a paradigm, is that the analyst of data or information, must seek to bring out the meaning of the text from the perspective of its author, which will entail attention to the social and historical context within which the data was produced (Bryman, 2008).

However there are difficulties and limitations with this premise, and according to Dilthey, the anthropology of experience deals with how individuals actually experience their culture through their own consciousness. This is founded on two principles as expounded by Davidson (1984) and Grandy (1973). Davidson argues that the Principle of Charity is where we interpret as best we can, the thoughts and ideas of the other, while Grandy's Principle of Humanity, which is a further development on the previous principle, requires that when interpreting another speaker, we must assume that his or her beliefs and desires are connected to each other and to reality in some way, and attribute to her or him the propositional attitudes one supposes one would have oneself in those circumstances. The experience is not just data, but also feelings and expectations. It is not just what is experienced verbally but also through thought and desire, through senses, images

and impressions. However, we can only experience our own life and we cannot know another's experience though we may think we do through clues and inferences.

Dilthey's response in attempting to overcome the shortcomings of individual experience was to "transcend the narrow sphere of experience by interpreting expressions" (1976, p. 230). To him this meant the interpreting, understanding and methodology of hermeneutics, and the representations, performances, texts or objectifications of experiences. In a position known as Hermeneutic Intentionalism, Skinner (1972, 1975) proposed that it is possible to interpret the author's intention. Skinner added that the notion of intention is a reaction against the prevailing orthodoxy of the 20th century, which is that of a literal interpretation of the text itself and also of the social context giving rise to the particular text (Skinner, 1975). Instead, in what is known as the 'nexus of meaning' by Dilthey and others within the classical hermeneutic tradition, a specific text is construed by the author against the background of their goals, beliefs and experiences, while interacting with the natural and social environment. In a similar context, Coseriu (1996) uses the term 'umfeld' and explains how reconstruction of 'umfeld' aims at viewing texts within their larger social, historical and cultural perspectives, upon which their actual meaning is critically dependant. Within this dissertation, the expressions represented, and later analysed, are the encapsulations of the experience of myself and others, performed with the realisation that these accounts do not necessarily fully encompass the richness and complexity of all that was thought or felt during that experience (Bruner, 1986). Therefore the inevitable gaps between the reality, experience and expressions and the potential tensions, are a key part in the interpretation of these representations, which are revealed in later chapters.

As I wrote earlier on page 50 , interpretivism's main tenet is that research can never be objectively observed from the outside, rather it must be observed from inside through the direct experience of the people involved. The role of the researcher in

the interpretivist paradigm is to, “understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants” (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 19). A further explication of this approach is that it features many elements which are more or less synonymous with an inductive approach rather than a deductive approach. It is concerned with the development of theory out of data in an approach that is iterative or recursive. As Bryman (2008) describes it, this means that data collection and analysis proceed in tandem, repeatedly referring back to each other. Schiff et al (2006) argue that there is no real or true self existing in the structure of our brains, and that instead, the stories we compose create the illusion of seamless continuity in our experiences, and a sense of self sameness. Therefore according to this perspective, we choose our events and facts with a narrative searchlight, collating information and evidence that fits our stories and discarding those which do not. Once we have adopted particular tales, events make sense within that story. Therefore as a researcher in this paradigm, I seek to understand rather than explain, I seek to reveal rather than to make a startling new discovery or revelation, and in doing so, I wish to draw out the stories of lives lived (Sparkes, 2003).

Research Methods

Narrative inquiry often focuses on difference, of aspiring to open up particularities of experience to a wider viewing, which tends to focus on the personal or the local, the unusual or marginal of lived experience. The narrative landscape is a rough terrain, with unfenced and blurry boundaries, which allow interaction and visitation from multidisciplinary neighbours with ease, visitors who bring their different traditions and ingredients. In order to explore this territory, I employed a number of methods as I outlined in the opening chapter, such as interview, autoethnography, and narrative fiction, which are predominant in the interpretative paradigm. Braiding in the threads from the transformative paradigm which represents perspectives for example, from those experiencing marginalisation, disempowerment, oppression and who are otherwise traditionally silenced,

essentially requires the use of a diversity of qualitative methods, including some of which I have outlined above. Through this process, I therefore seek to make the invisible visible, to reveal the hidden voices of the dislocated, and to allow them to sing and flourish in a landscape of belonging.

Writing as Inquiry

It can be tricky, evasive, messy, nebulous and daunting. It can shift your heart, your mind, your veins and creep into your very marrow. One creature that writing as inquiry can never claim to be is indifferent or apologetic. Writing as inquiry will not assume nor will it mystify. Instead it helps to create a way of knowing, of experiencing the world. Writing can also create a space for investigating ourselves and others in a variety of different processes. Almost two thousand years ago, Seneca wrote of the art of askesis, the training of the self by oneself, of establishing a relationship with oneself through self-writing. The word is made flesh by the process of writing (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000). Personal narrative gives shape to experience, where we come to know ourselves through our unfolding awareness of being, as well as through reflecting on our sense of past and future (Ochs and Capps, 1996). Within the continuum of narrative inquiry, Riessman (2008) talks of uncovering the hidden. Clandinin and Connelly write that "narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical" and further state that "our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines" (2000, p. 121). Writing is not just a "telling" about the social world or a "mopping up" activity, but as described by Richardson (2000), it is also a method of discovery and analysis, a method of "knowing". This "knowing" helps towards shaping a more complete picture of who I am, what I am, where I am, where I have come from, and my place in the community. Richardson and St. Pierre later describe how they use writing to uncover findings about the world and to make sense of it (2005). St. Pierre called this "nomadic inquiry" and explains how writing becomes the field of play where thought is happening through the writing process and

therefore we are enabled to produce different or difficult knowledge differently (2005, p. 969).

Anderson expands on this concept further, writing of self-knowledge which lies at the juncture of biography and society, and which comes from

understanding our personal lives, identities, and feelings as deeply connected to in large part constituted by [...] the sociocultural contexts in which we live (2006, p. 390).

With this approach, I have gone on a journey of discovery, a journey where I foraged for fragments of episodes in my life, probed into messy and uncomfortable areas of my personal experience, and forged connections with where I am now on my own journey and my sense of place and identity within my community (Ochs and Caps, 1996; St. Clair, 2005).

By using an autoethnographic approach, I draw on some personal episodes about home, belonging and community, leaning on significant authors in this sphere such as Speedy (2008), Sparkes (2003), Ellis (1997, 2004), among others. I also use dramatized interviewing to reveal the voice of some of those displaced by the land commission in the 1950's, who are still alive today. These transplanted families are among the most recent examples in our very chequered history of upheaval, relocation and reorientation, and the after effects are still being experienced by the second generation of those initiates. Key texts in this field come from authors such as Richardson (1997), Clandinin and Connolly (2000), Holstein and Gubrium (2004), and Richardson and St. Pierre (2005). To further add to the tapestry, I use a voice from yet an older generation, that of my great grandfather Paddy, who left Co. Clare in the 1890's for Australia, and who returned nearly 25 years later. I explore his story of dislocation and attempts at reintegration into a changed society. The construct and lynchpin for this overall exploration will be a fictional character (Speedy, 2008) which will be used to explain and analyse the findings.

Autoethnography

Stories can help us to create, interpret and change our social, cultural, political and personal lives. Autoethnographic texts point out not only the necessity of narrative in our world but also the power of narrative to reveal and revise that world, even when we struggle for words, or when we fail to find them (Holman Jones, 2005; Ellis and Bochner, 2006). Both Bochner (2001) and Spry (2001) explore how emotions are essential to understanding and theorising the relationship between self, power and culture, focussing on how these texts create a palpable emotional experience of knowing, being and acting on the world. In her later description of autoethnography, Spry sees the genre as a way of achieving personal transformation when the researcher places their experience within the larger context of society through critical self-reflection (2001). The words of Ellis and Bochner really resonate with me when they describe autoethnography as a mode of inquiry

which is unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious and creative . . . showing struggle, passion, embodied life and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations where people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning (Ellis and Bochner, 2006, p. 433).

Therefore as a genre, autoethnography allows for the personal and the autobiographical as a legitimate site for research into self and culture. This space is a potential site of meaning making between reader and writer.

In addition, this research includes other characteristics of autoethnography as outlined by Ellis (1997, 1999), such as sociological introspection, emotional recall, and the inclusion of the researcher's vulnerable self. Sparkes (2001) expands on this and describes the production of evocative stories, thus creating the effect of reality, of celebrating concrete experience and intimate detail through "thick descriptions", and of encouraging compassion and empathy in the reader (p. 210). Evocative autoethnographers justify their standpoint, according to Anderson (2006) and argue that creating an emotional resonance with the reader is their

primary objective. Expanding on Speedy's premise (2005b) that autoethnography is something of a slippery customer, Holman-Jones claims that autoethnographic writing can also be called a balancing act, creating "charged moments of clarity, connection and change" (2005, p. 764). Taking this idea as a point of departure, she creates her own response, telling us that autoethnography sets a scene and recounts a story which weaves intricate connections within life,

experience, theory and evocation . . . and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives (2005, p. 765).

Narrative Interviewing

Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 697).

Clandinin and Connelly discuss the use of conversation and interview as field texts (2000). They demonstrate that conversations are marked by equality among participants and allow for flexibility and exploration into areas beyond what is possible in an interview. Narrative interviewing allows for probing into the unsaid and unsayable and also allows for telling stories. This pleating within a conversation is done in an environment of mutual trust, listening and caring for the experience recounted by the other. Mischler (1986) furthers this practice and reconceptualises research interviewing as a discursive accomplishment where the speaker and listener extract events and experiences collaboratively, jointly constructing narrative and meaning. This approach has more similarities with ethnographic practice than with mainstream social science interviewing practice, which traditionally follows a structured format, asking pre-established questions which can then be codified and classified, with the aim of explaining the social world through rigorous and scientific techniques (Fontana, 2003; Riessman, 2008). As some of the situations highlighted throughout this research reveal, stories can provide powerful insights into the lived experience of silent or absent others that can inform, awaken, or disturb readers by illustrating their involvement

in social processes about which they may not be consciously aware (Iser, 1974). The 'transplanted' voices are self-conscious of their place within the community and of their still possibly tenuous and contentious positions as 'blow-ins' and being referred to locally as one of 'those crowd that took the good land and were given a cow and tools on top of it all'.

In contrast, the ambition is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief or generalised statements, thus requiring what he describes as a substantial change in practice (Mischler, 1986). McCracken (1988) on the 'long interview' says that it can take us into the mental world of the interviewee, revealing the logic by which he or she sees the world, also giving us the opportunity to step into the mind of another, seeing and experiencing their world from their particular viewpoint.

Additionally, new empathetic approaches take an ethical stance favouring the individual or group being studied, in that the interviewer becomes advocate and participant in the study, thus hoping to highlight conditions and social policies in favour of the interviewee (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Ellis et al. (1997) discuss the topic of interactive interviewing as

An interpretive practice for getting an in-depth and intimate understanding of people's experiences with emotionally charged and sensitive topics (1997, p. 121).

Kiesinger and Tillmann-Healy (2004) along with Ellis (ibid), similarly view interviewing as a collaborative communication process occurring between researchers and respondents, which involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both. They view the stories, feelings and insights of the researcher in this interactive encounter as more than just tactics to encourage respondents to open up. Etherington (2004) agrees that this viewpoint matches her own and describes a view of interviewing where interviewers must be creative and adapt to the ever-changing situations they co-create. According to Mischler (1986) this process allows for a level of interpretation and understanding not present in traditional hierarchical interview situations, where instead, the interviewer is "not

unlike a highly trained instrument and remains substantially detached from the situation and the respondent" (Fontana, 2003, p. 53).

In her in-depth exploration of the choreography between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader, history and culture, Riessman (2008) develops this process further, and outlines an approach to oral narrative which she calls dialogic/performance analysis. Within this approach, the vital interaction between speakers which is produced dialogically and performed as narrative, is interrogated, the researcher becomes an active presence in the text, and the boundaries of what is or is not included in narrative analysis are extended to emphasise the importance of interaction. Goffman (1974) has described how speakers are often more concerned about performing to an audience, projecting images and impressions of themselves, rather than giving information. This implies that the response of the audience or reader is involved in the art of storytelling. Previous to this, Bakhtin had also argued that every narrative includes a polyphony of voices, comprising of hidden internal politics, historical discourses and ambiguities, thus discounting the narrator as the sole and final arbiter over meaning (Bakhtin in Dentith, 1995). In doing so, the social science researcher, according to Riessman,

can interrogate particular words, listen to voices of minor characters, identify hidden discourses speakers take for granted, and locate gaps and indeterminate sections in personal narrative (2008, p. 107).

If, as researchers using dialogic/performative methods, we extend this interaction to readers on the understanding that they too are an intrinsic part of the interpretative process, bringing their situated identities and cultural filters with them, then we need to be prepared to acknowledge that audiences will read the narrative texts in all sorts of ways. Iser (1993) reminds us that the meaning is not concealed within the text, but that it is brought to life with our readings. I am conscious as I probe, interact, question and create meaning from the stories and experiences revealed, that I, along with you the reader, am very much a co-creator

of the final outcome. I am mindful too that this meaning could have swayed and evolved in another direction entirely if for example, it had been an older or younger voice inquiring, or if the interviewer was male, or a stranger, or even spoke in the same tongue as the interviewee.

Language

In her editing of the copious scribblings and notebooks of author Hélène Cixous, Susan Sellers (2004) noted that the transcriptions of the writings created unique difficulties for her as translator. This was particularly in relation to contextualising the precise meaning of a word which may have multiple possibilities in the other language. Wax also highlighted language and cultural difficulties which she had to overcome in her study of 'disloyal' Japanese internees in America between 1943 and 1945. She noted that while respondents may be fluent in the language of the interviewer, that

there are different ways of saying things – or indeed, certain things that should not be said at all – linking language and cultural manifestations (Wax, cited in Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 707).

Reliance on interpreters leaves one vulnerable to added layers of meanings, prejudices and interpretations. I had first-hand experience of how this can lead to misunderstandings while working with a group of Deaf adult learners in the mid 1990's. A sign language interpreter used the sign for 'cheat' during a discussion on approaches to adult learning, the exact context of which escapes me after the passage of two decades, however it is not essential for the purpose of this illustration. This incident occurred during the very early sessions of a two year long programme, and learners erupted at the perceived suggestion that they would 'cheat' during the course of the programme, and became a central focus of the 'storming' phase in the group's development. The humbling lesson from this experience taught us as a team of the importance of fully briefing sign language interpreters in the language and context of phrases being used during the course

of the sessions. From the perspective of this research, the fact that the first language of Séamus is not English did not unduly impact on the interpretation of his words in the interview. We possibly could have conducted the interview in Irish, however I will never have the level of fluency, grammatical accuracy and breadth of vocabulary required to communicate confidently and with expression to a native speaker of his eloquence. Many Irish words which peppered the conversation were automatically translated by me in the transcriptions, as I understood their meaning and context from familiarity in our discussions and our relationship. I am forever conscious of what has been lost during the course of the transcription and interpretation of the conversation - key features such as cadence, rich native accent, and other interruptions during the process, and that the complex verbal exchange has been transformed into an object on a page, a representation of what has been said between us. I am mindful too of Riessman's acknowledgement that like all stories,

it is selective and perspectival, reflecting the power of memory to remember, forget, neglect, and amplify moments in the stream of experience (Riessman, 2008, p. 29).

Narrative Fiction

Delving further into the area of creation and adaption as noted earlier by Etherington (2004), I probe into the area of fiction in this research, fiction which can bring people through doors that remain closed to approaches that are too weighed down by the duty to literal truth (Speedy, 2008). There are established traditions of using fictionalised research within the social science field, including examples such as Yalom (1991, 2000), who has contributed novels in psychotherapy to depict symbolic equivalents of clients in order to portray people and events which would otherwise be unethical. Expanding on Ellis and Bochner's (1996b) distinction between 'making something' and 'making something up', Sparkes (1997) discusses the use of logical and empirical arguments which may convince us of their truth, as opposed to stories which convince us of their life likeness. He further differentiates in a later text between fictionalised accounts of an event or events,

where the validation rests on 'being there', and creative fictions which rely on the production of evocative texts and on verisimilitude, allowing readers to interact with the texts and come to their own conclusions about what is going on (2002a). Clough (2002) in his 'Narrative and Fiction in Educational Research', has created short stories to depict tales of schooling which would otherwise remain untold. Furthermore, in his discussion on the use of narrative and fiction in educational research, he observes that his stories impart fragments of data and draw on the events of lived experience, to create fictional stories of lives lived. Therefore they are stories which could be true since they derive from real events and feelings and conversations, but they are ultimately fictions, narratives woven from an amalgam of raw data, real details, and where necessary, symbolic equivalents, where truths are uncovered. Reed (2017) too uses a tale to expound on an academic argument while remaining a piece of fiction. Similarly Barone (1995) when reflecting on the notion of using storytelling and sharing in an educational context, says that the point of storytelling is not to provoke a single limited confluent reading, but rather to persuade readers to contribute to the dilemmas they pose, which may be sensitive or complex. Mining a seam of thought which I am personally drawn to, Iser (1974) further discusses the concept of exploring communication in the intersections between text and reality and between the text and the reader. He quashes what he calls the misleading assumption that fiction is in opposition to reality, and says instead that it should be linked in terms not of opposition but of communication, where fiction is used as a means of telling us something about reality.

Bruner (1986) also considers the application of the imaginative in the narrative mode of knowing, which leads to good stories, gripping drama, believable though not always true historical accounts of situations. This narrative knowing also deals with human or humanlike intention and actions, and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course, which endeavours to locate the particulars of experience in time and place. There is of course always the danger that fact could

become overwhelmed by fiction and that the blurred lines and murky terrain could become all too difficult and fraught for the intrepid traveller. The hazard of this practice is shared by Appell in his 1989 paper in which he highlights the growing trend among anthropologists and ethnographers to create or 'over enhance' data and findings, or where they seek the limelight for themselves. Much like the Shakespearean adage where "all the world's a stage . . . ", reality becomes more and more of a performance where substance is sacrificed for image (Appell, 1989, p. 167). He further argues that the interpreter is at the centre, and that the interpretive act is egocentric with the interpreter as the focus of attention. This self-indulgence and self-promotion is certainly not something which I wish to entertain or pander to throughout the course of this research. While the quality of the performance or representation itself is of course important in order to reach a wide cross section of the community in a meaningful and accessible way, Sparkes states that

the representation needs to be executed in an accomplished fashion . . . to do justice to the art form (2003, p. 491).

Denison and Rinehart (2000) also support this view and note the difficulties of producing storied accounts which are aesthetically pleasing, demonstrating literary skills with analytical scholarship.

Ethical Mindfulness and Stories

As a researcher in the narrative mode, I am conscious of always needing to be vigilant and mindful of how a person or situation is portrayed in the stories and recreations of events and experiences. There could be conflict between how that depiction or experience is remembered by the reader. This dilemma is something that writers of memoirs often have to contend with, where their version of the truth is different to that of their siblings or other family members. Examples such of strife and disagreement abound in familial reactions to the accounts of, for instance, Karl Ove Knausgård (2009), Lily Brett (1997) or closer to home, Frank McCourt (1996)

whose own mother declared that he had greatly exaggerated the level of poverty and misery in his memoir 'Angela's Ashes', and denounced him publicly. Academic writers such as Carolyn Ellis have also faced such criticism with her 1986 Fisher Folk research. As Sikes notes eloquently,

these stories make it clear that writing is never neutral or innocent because it is a social and political activity with consequences and that, as such, writing about, and thereby re-presenting lives carries a heavy ethical burden (Sikes, 2010, p. 11).

Ellis later acknowledges the responsibility and complexity of writing about people who may be identified within the writing and warns that

each decision requires assessment of the local circumstances and a desire to avoid doing harm (2004, p. 153),

thus shifting her position as a consequence of reflection on this particular research. Ledwith (2005) also recounts with humility, her experience of being identified and challenged in her 'outsider' perspective by a community activist in a previous working relationship. It is relevant then that the transformative approach urges us to not only be aware of, but to examine closely the power relationship in the collaboration between researcher and those being researched.

Similarly, there is a recognition that writing autobiographically privileges the experiences and perceptions of the researcher/writer and needs to be acknowledged as such (Sikes, 2010). If we concede that as humans in a social world, there is little we do in total isolation, then as Delamont (2009) notes, there is the inevitability that whatever fictional or pseudonyms are employed, that everyone who appears in the narrative is potentially identifiable. Consequently there is concern about not only 'what' we write, but the implications of 'how' we write the story. In the portrayal of the story of transplantation from the west to the east of Ireland, I have chosen to use pseudonyms, though the identification of the general location is retained as there are several families locally in a similar situation

and this family would therefore not be specifically identifiable. This is purely in the interests of protecting the discretion and confidentiality of a very private family, keeping in mind that I am very conscious of the responsibility to ensure that the representations of stories and lives is done respectfully, and taking account of my privileged position as researcher, which does not demean or belittle (Sikes, 2010). The participant in the research was made aware of the purpose of the conversation and understood the context of the research being undertaken, generously sharing his story and experience with a fullness of heart. In relation to the voice of my mother, along with Ellis (1993) and Freadman (2004), I am always conscious of the tension between telling her valuable story which is representative of so many women of her era, and of loyalty to her and to our familial relationship. Empathising with Ellis (2007) when she describes the "implicit trust between those who have died and telling what is necessary for healing and construction of self" (p. 25), I have taken into account the private nature and inherent modesty of my mother in how the fragments are represented.

I am also mindful, as is Bruner (1991) and Ellis (1995), of the choices which are made about what is included and what is left out of the stories, or what is concealed and revealed, similar to techniques and approaches taken in ethnographic storytelling and memoir. I take heed too of Medford's (2006) description of the 'mindful slippage' between our experience of reality or truth and truthfulness, between what we know or cannot remember, and what we write. However it is the words of Ellis (2004) which most closely resonate with my own feelings and reflections on what has been written, and the stories which have not been told, keeping account that,

deciding what to tell comes not from some rigid rule, but from living through the experiences we write about and honouring the feelings that come with the telling of the particular story (p. 152).

Respect, transparency, reciprocity are important values, as are rigour and trustworthiness, which are preserved and sustained throughout the course of this research. In the words of Malcolm (1990), I have tried to be wise and I hope I have honoured those values within the essence of the stories which follow.

At the outset of this chapter, I wrote of my interest in telling stories, of seeking to gather fragments of tales and recollections, and in trying to untangle the knots and snarls in the threads to make sense of these stories. Within the body of the chapter, we have explored the context for using narrative inquiry and described the characteristics of the approach taken during this research. I have acknowledged the permeability of the paradigmatic boundaries between the interpretative and transformative methodologies and have situated myself as researcher in this blurred territory. In taking this viewpoint, I recognise the influence it has on how I seek to interpret and illuminate the social world by revealing unexplored assumptions, in creating new ways of knowing, and through generating greater questioning and reflection.

The following three chapters begin with a short prelude to each, giving a flavour of the style and the layout of the stories and segments which follow, and I leave the concluding lines of this chapter to Coles, who writes;

But the beauty of a good story is its openness – the way you or I or anyone reading it can take it in and use it for ourselves (Coles, 1989, p. 47).

Reflection

For an Exile

When you dream, it is always home.
You are there among your own,
The rhythm of their voices rising like song
Your blood would sing through any dark.

Then you awake to find yourself listening
To the sounds of traffic in another land.
For a moment, your whole body recoils
At the strange emptiness of where you are.

This country is cold to your voice.
It is still a place without echoes.
Nothing of yours has happened here.

No one knows you,
The language slows you,
The thick accent smothers your presence.

You sound foreign to yourself;
Their eyes reflect how strange you seem
When seen across a cold distance
This has no bridge to carry
The charisma in which your friends
Delight at home.

The things you brought back from home
Look back at you, out of place here
They take on a lonely power.

You cringe at the thought
That someone might see you from home
Might see you now here,
In this unsheltered room.

Gradually you will come to find
Your way to friends who will open
Doors into a new belonging.

Slowly a new world will open for you.
The eyes of your heart, refined
By this desert time, will be free
To see and celebrate the new life
For which you sacrificed so much.

(excerpt from O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 124).

Prelude to Chapter 4

The following section with my great-grandfather, Paddy 'The Kid' Casey is represented in a number of ways. Firstly, it is portrayed in story form primarily shaped by listening to my father's recollections as a small boy from his time spent with the older man. Secondly, by his letters to home which are his exterior public self. The font used for the letters is, I feel, symbolic of the era and is characterised as follows – *Paddy 'The Kid' Casey*. Finally, his inner thoughts and voice are presented on the left side of the page, where the following font - *Paddy 'The Kid' Casey*, seemed to me, to be more symbolic of his thoughts or streams of consciousness.

Chapter 4

Great grandfather stories – The Outsider from the Outback

*Cragmoher, Corofin, Co. Clare,
Ireland, 1950*

*And what was it all for, what good
did it do, and all the long years with
only the odd lonely word from
home, ‘When will you be back
Paddy, any sign of you returning
home Paddy, it’s all cleared up here
now and Hogan thinks it’s safe for
you to reclaim possession of the
farm now Paddy, did you ever hit up
with any nice girl at all Paddy, isn’t
it about time for you and you the fine
young buck, are you coming back
home at all Paddy, and Paddy did
you ever have any luck with the
gold?’ I wonder . . . is it still . . . well
I wonder?*

“Tell me again, tell me Ganda of the story of the wild man with the stories written all over him and the one about the journey on the big ship, please Ganda, please, g’wan, do, please”. The small child snuggled up to the old man waiting expectantly to hear the wonderful magical tales that his grandfather would only tell on rare occasions, tales of his trip to the land far away, to Australia. Aus-tral-i-a, its four syllables rolling on the tongue, evoking adventure, magic, mystery and warmth. These were usually the ‘Fair Days’ when he had ventured to Ennis to view the stock for sale. A good

Fair Day would be spent mingling with the local farmers and mountainy men, who would only emerge for occasions such as these as well as the Christmas and Easter religious celebrations, the traders touting their wares along the street with a final obligatory gathering in the nearest drinking emporium to down a few pints and muse over the happenings of the day with his contemporaries. His humour would be conditioned by his success or otherwise with the cards and the quantity and sometimes dubious quality of Nacey Cleary's barrels. It was on nights such as this that the barriers might be breached and the child would be enthralled with tales which were almost beyond what his young imagination could countenance. Reluctant at first, grudging, dribbles of words, bits of stories, hesitations, "Ah but you're too young to be hearin' that, wait till you're older boyo," words crescendo and flow, until the final torrents gush and ebb as the child eventually drifts off to sleep. This was the rhythm of his storytelling. The child's sleepy silence lost on the older man as he himself dreamed and reminisced, wondered and regretted.

Brisbane, Australia, February 1891

*Jaysus but tis a hard place this, hard
and hot, a miserable, brutal place it
is, what in the Lord God of Almighty
has me here, what, only the curse of
God on all the Custys and all their
seed breed and generation, on every
last one of them, tis for them and
them only that I'm here in this
godforsaken hellhole, such a fool as
I am havin' taken that bet out on the
land, on the lovely Rineen that my
grandfather left to me, and I could be*

*there now, tis harvest and the oats
will be fine and ripe and ready for
picking up in the long field, and
down in the long meadow, the last
ricks of hay should be long in now
and nicely snug in the high shed for
the winter foddering, below in the
orchard, chrisht, I can nearly smell
them, the boughs will be nearly on
the ground with the fine fruit and I
can smell the lovely moist apple cake
that Mamo used to make with them,
the warm baking smell seeping from
the crock pot, escaping to taunt us
when she lifted the lid*

Bassarat, Australia, January 1894

To my dear brother Marty

*After a lonely Christmas I received your letter yesterday which gave me
a start to hear that Auntie Biddy and my sister Susan are not well. I
hope that the few bob I sent back home in the last letter will go someway
towards paying their way with Dr. Lennane. I'm getting along grand here
working as a storeman and carter, which brings me all over the place.
There's news of some more new minefields after been discovered further up
from here. It is a temptation to me to get away from here though I'm
eternally grateful to Dan for the job here, God knows, brother, how I long
for some adventure like in those stories from the books of Master Clancy
in the schoolroom back in Ruane. Though it is misfortune that has me here*

and them damblasted Gusty's, God forgive me, but I may as well make some good of it. The farming is no earthly good to me here. The world is all upside down here with winter coming upon us now with beautiful weather the same as summer at home. This last year seen 4 months without so much as a drop of rain. I've seen fine cattle strowed dead in water holes or along the roads all for the want of water and grass burnt to a tinder, down to the very clay. And the rain when it comes is no gentle drizzle but a downpour the same as a cascade. You will get land here, fine land for £1 an acre yearly rent that a pair of horses will work, same as home. The land too where good, is mightily rich. If a man has a farm and a will to work, he can do very well. He sows wheat in the month of April and it grows first rate wheat. After cutting the wheat he ploughs it and puts in a crop of Indian corn. He has that off before he wants the soil for wheat again, that is two crops in the year. All the crops pays very well, wheat from 11 to 15 shillings per bushel of 60 lb, corn 9 to 11 shillings per bushel. Cousin Dan is afraid that I will take a start to these latest diggings, for a man can make a fortune here fierce quick if he did go to the wild country to live and live there like wild beasts where a man might not see a priest for years nor the face of another white man for many months, with no roads and no bridges across rivers. It is a terribly quandary to be in, for I might be a wealthier man more quickly. I hope the home place is being looked after well, and that you are keeping up with the fencing down in the low fields for that is a desperate weak spot. I am quite comfortable here all the same. I have work and good lodgings and am near the priest and church, I have plenty as yet thank God. A man cannot expect to succeed here unless he keeps himself sober and steady and minds his work regular, always keeping from bad company. I will send you a newspaper from this place the next time with all the news and goings on from this part of the world, for I have not the time or the interest to write it all for you now. Would you countenance it but didn't I meet Tommy McMahon some weeks ago after he landed.

God but it was just great to have someone to talk to about the home place and all the goings on and bantering together. He isn't long here but is doing well thank God and has met a lovely girl from Cork who had travelled over on the same boat as himself. I suppose the goats are still gallivanting up in the crag, don't let them get too plentiful for although the young meat is lovely, they'll tear strips out of the side of that mountain if you let them get out of hand. I hope my brothers and sisters there still think of me, tell all that I am well and wish them God's blessings. Hopefully it will not be long more now.

Your affectionate brother

Paddy

Rineen, Co. Clare, Ireland, 1941

Where were they all now? Where were those who had travelled with me that long miserable journey in 1891, most of them sick in the knowledge that they would most likely never again see their native land, full of remorse for the circumstances that had left them with no option but to go and seek a better life for themselves, a life that could surely be no worse than that they had left behind. Others then, full of anticipation and a lust for seeking adventure and fortune, had their dreams worked out for them,

*had they? Where were they, where?
And where were those who pulled
and dragged and sweated with me,
who bled and toiled, discharging
vessels from all over the world, their
vast containers with an
inconceivable medley of goods
coming into the port at Brisbane,
men from places I had only ever
heard of in books from school, men
of every hue imaginable, from the
colour of freshly cut turf, and
through to the tan of dried oak and
all the multitude of shades in
between, to the buttery men from
Chinaland, and the railway, that was
surely the worst, if there was ever a
hell, it was out there in the
Nullarbor, the place of no trees,
Christ there wasn't even a blade of
grass nor a drop of rain, three years
of searing heat, the sun a burning
white ball in the sky, skin constantly
plastered in a grime of sweat and
dust, the very rails of steel writhing
in the simmering heat as they were
laid on the pitiless red earth, from
Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie, into the
land of the painted people, the land
of the Wangai, . . . and where was
my lovely Mundowie, my beautiful*

*painted woman with her eyes the
colour of a calf, with our firstborn, a
son who was never to draw a breath
in this world, oh God but the terrible
wild keening coming out of her
horrified me, tore into my marrow,
seared my heart and stole a piece of
my soul and so when she silently
slipped away back to her own
people, the Wangai, that was it, I
knew then, knew deep down that I
was finished, that the dream of land
I promised myself in Mundrabilla,
of settling down, of raising a family,
of finally living and dying here, was
over and that I would return to
Rineen, my lovely Rineen . . .*

Believing, with Max Weber, that man (sic) is an animal suspended in webs of significance he (sic) himself (sic) has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973, p. 5).

Why then is it important or relevant at all to grasp this story of one man's experience of enforced emigration, of displacement and loss and of the silence of 25 years of his life, a silence which has spilled over into subsequent generations of my family? Two main strands of this web which have been woven will be traced, and hopefully, without shattering the delicately spun fragments, I will explore threads of representation and voice. There is some blurring between these chosen aspects which I have found difficult to isolate definitively.

The analytic lens through which I have viewed and written this account is a way towards shaping or ordering past experience, as Chase calls it, 'retrospective meaning making' (2005, p. 656). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) hold the view that narratives are a form of representation which describe human experience as it unfurls over time. This narrative of emigration has, I hope, attempted to do just that, in trying to recreate the feelings and emotions which were likely to have been experienced by young Paddy 'The Kid' Casey, my great grandfather, a man who left his family, his own farm of land, his brothers and sisters, his little village of Ruane, near Ennis in Co. Clare, sometime in the late 1880s. Though there are many huge gaps in his story and in the chronology of events in his younger life, some facts are known which I will try to contextualise in the following section.

It is clear from my father's version of events, that as a result of having acted as guarantor for a neighbour who took out a loan and subsequently defaulted on that loan, young Paddy, being underage, was in a predicament. As he was not yet 21, the legal age for undertaking such a deed, and because the debt could not be paid, Paddy acted under guidance from his neighbour, a barrister. He was advised that he should make distance between himself and the situation until things settled down and the barrister was given power of attorney over Paddy's affairs. Australia was his obvious destination as Co. Clare had the greatest intensity of emigration to that part of the world relative to its population than any other county in Ireland at the time. There is a common myth in Ireland that anyone who went to Australia in the 1800's was a convict and went under an illusion of criminality, though that crime might be no more than stealing a loaf of bread or a brace of chickens (Parish record, Corofin, Co. Clare, 1872, re. Nicholas Hehir). The other widespread notion is that anyone who went over, never came back and was doomed to a life of eternal sorrow and regret for never again setting foot back on the home sod, or 'bás in Éireann', to die in Ireland. As evidenced in my own family story, they certainly did go as convicts, for often the slightest of misdemeanours, or for being a so-called trouble maker. Others did emigrate, never to return, and yes, there were those who went

over to make their fortune and did return often with great riches, or in the case of my own great grandfather, in silence and mystery, with only his ironwood stick.

The point for now is only that ethnography is thick description . . . a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he (sic) must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render (Geertz, 1973, p. 17).

The tangle of threads suspended in this narrative are various and could have taken on diverse textures and hues as the story progressed. As a young fit man with good prospects, who had spent all of his young adulthood in Australia, it is quite possible that he did have a relationship of some sort with an ambitious young woman from his home country who would have her eyes on such a catch. He also spent a number of years working on the Nullarbor railway line, leaving before its completion. Based in South Western Australia, just at the Southern margin of the Victoria desert, this was home to the indigenous Yalata people, who Paddy could feasibly have encountered. Again as a family, we have no certain evidence of any liaison or possible offspring, though it is something which intrigues me.

Within the continuum of narrative inquiry, Riessman (2008) talks of uncovering the hidden. Narrative researchers such as Gubrium and Holstein (1997), Bruner (1986), and Polkinghorne (1995), describe narrative as a way of understanding and organising one's own and others' actions, events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of creating connections and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (Chase, 2005). Therefore rendering this particular lived experience initially was not straightforward and I was drawn to researchers who advocated and used fictional depictions to represent their work, such as Ellis (1993) and Richardson (1997). The concept of montage is described by Denzin (2011), where several different images are superimposed on one another, which are designed to build on interpretations of an event or events as the scene unfolds. What this narrative has

attempted to do is create a mosaic of 'odds and ends', a set of representations which is consistent with other evidence. Instead of sequential elements of construction and improvised moments of an event, the creation of Paddy's narrative cross stitches and interlinks through time, past and present, splicing reality with probability, and possibility with enigma. It does not necessarily seek to be representative of the experiences of emigrants to Australia during this period. Instead, it endeavours to fashion some meaning making into the event of emigration from the perspective of one man, a man who happened to be my great grandfather.

Mishler (1986) acknowledges that rather than finding narratives, the researcher instead is a participant in their creation. In this case, Paddy's simulated letter communicates one aspect of his story, the version that he had wanted highlighted. In this representation, I have not tried to write or rewrite Paddy's story. This is not history or even 'his' story. His 'stream of consciousness' reminiscences are another aspect to his story, the side which he had not necessarily wanted to relate, the darker side of being an emigrant, the loneliness and displacement, the disappointment and an ever present anger which remained with him until his death. The version of events which he would have relayed to my father, the little boy from earlier in the story, was of places and people, of the landscape, of strangeness and of the unusual. There was no space for expressing how he felt among this different tribe, of a land that was to him, upside down, of strange painted people, of unusual animals which were beyond his experience from the limited range of books available to him in the small school house in Ruane, Co. Clare. As Bauman (2001) states the same story will be told in a different way depending on the audience at hand, elements will change and either be added or deleted to emphasise the narrator's experience, and so it was with Paddy, who appears to have relayed a particular version of events through the family, or more pointedly, remained silent about what should have been the most active part of his long life.

Tedlock (2011) beautifully exemplifies a further aspect of narrative, the 'enchanted sacred spot', which creates a space between self and other, between exterior and interior, thought and emotion, history and memory, and thus negates the control of lineal history. So as a result, many aspects of Paddy's story are a mirage, seductively real, yet dependent on the theatre of my imagination for life. Ricoeur (1992) acknowledges that it is because of the elusive character of real life that fiction is needed in order to organise life retrospectively, and ultimately breathes form into the flux and fragments of life.

Like many other contemporary qualitative researchers, narrative researchers view themselves as narrators. Chase (2005) describes how researchers develop meaning out of the material being studied, and as they construct others' voices and realities, they are developing their own voices. This notion of researchers as narrators, opens up complex issues of voice and of representation. Those such as Gubrium and Holstein (2001) argue that narrators construct revised and unsettled identities rather than immovable and authentic selves. Riessman (2008) speaks of narrative inquiry as being elusive and having indeterminate borders, raising the issue of truth and representations which are authentic. I was very conscious in writing this piece of wanting to create a particular viewpoint of Paddy, not an idealistic one, but a voice which nonetheless might explain the gap of a quarter century in his life. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) speak of this process as one of 'narrative linkages' where a storyteller develops creative connections between the biographical particulars of their life and in the constraints in their environment for self and reality construction.

In an analysis of Stevens' poem 'The Snow Man' (1954), Rogers, Vaughan, Swalehe, Rao, Svenkerud and Sood (1999) depict the dilemma of the researcher who could passively describe the landscape without interpretation, and yet risk overlooking the meaning of what is absent. In ascribing a voice or a side of things to the

absences in Paddy's story in the stream of consciousness threads, I am aware of having taken on the responsibility for naming what was unspoken, and possibly unsayable, as well as potentially never having happened at all. This dimension is what Rogers et al. (1999) note as an interpretive poetics of languages of the unsayable, and a restorying of texts around inquiry.

There is the sense also of the returning emigrant as having betrayed his community somewhat, in that they left for a 'better' life in a 'better' place. For many who returned, there was a deep sense of displacement and of isolation from what life was now and nostalgia for what had been there before. In the case of my great grandfather, this was exacerbated by the fact that there was a price put on his head when he returned. As a family, we had always understood that it was by a disgruntled neighbour who had designs on his fine farm and had hoped to persuade his younger caretaker brother to sell. Indeed my father speaks of the occasion when he met the man who had been given £5 to fire the shot at 'The Kid' but missed with the fright he got when Paddy glimpsed him and came barrelling towards the man to wallop him with the ironwood stick. "He frightened the bejaysus outa me and I was in a terror to chance it agin." I would not go so far as to say that this story is giving voice or naming silenced lives. However Paddy's time in Australia was something he never spoke of to anyone, with the exception of his young grandson, his eldest grandchild, who shared a room with him in the small house in the early days of my grandparents' marriage. It was him that Paddy 'The Kid' would regale with stories of his adventures and journeys, stories that he had not told to any of his own children. In our family there has always been a magnetic attraction towards Australia. When my father finally got a chance to visit while his uncle, Paddy's youngest son, worked there as a missionary in the 1970's, he said that he could visualise all of the places clearly in his mind from the very vivid descriptions of his grandfather from so many years earlier. The way my father describes it, he literally walked every step of the ground with Paddy through his stories.

So where has this journey along with Paddy 'The Kid' taken me? What are the dropped stitches and rips in the work? One personal outcome from this narrative inquiry is that it raises more questions than it answers. What happened to Paddy in that quarter of a century, who did he meet, where exactly did he go, who were the key people or events in this part of his life which may have influenced him on his journey? Did he have a breakdown or get into trouble with the law? Or did he live a fairly quiet uneventful life until finally deciding that he had spent enough time away and needed to reassert his roots back in his home place? Did he ever feel that he belonged in Australia or did he have a deep longing and nostalgic draw to come home? Though he had his fine farm of land to return to, it is unknown what eventually made him decide to leave the place where he had spent so many years of his life, coming back apparently with just the clothes on his back and his ironwood stick in his hand.

This account does not offer any definitive answers. The short journey travelled here is possibly not extensive enough, and does not include enough details of before and after Paddy's journey. My father's voice, the last living person in the family who would have had close contact with Paddy is fairly muted and there is no account of what my father would make of this rendition of his grandfather's life. There is possibly too much emphasis on description by Paddy of where he was and what was going on socially and economically at the time rather than on people and connections. I have not written about time in either the historical or mythical sense as described by Freeman (1998), nor is authenticity dealt with in any substantial way. However for me as a writer and as the great granddaughter of Paddy 'The Kid', it has been a cathartic experience, and has created a greater sense of understanding and empathy for this man and many others like him who left the land of their birth in their prime, only to return, if they did at all, to a changed world, out of time and out of place. I leave the final words to Paddy.

Rineen, Co. Clare, 1890

He sat silently on the cart as he waited at the creamery gate, the muted voices of the other men drifting, an occasional guffaw rising up above the clouds of smoke from the glowing pipes. The realisation that he might never again be together with his neighbours in such surroundings had earlier dawned on him. The headiness in the immediate aftermath of his decision, involuntary though it was, had long since given way to loneliness for he knew, in his heart of hearts, that there would be no return, at least not to the way it was now. Paddy knew that he would sorely miss the dawns and the sunsets, the cool streams with the tickling trout beyond the crag, the purple and gold and greyblue of the Burren hills, the patchwork of stonewalls, and the incomparable sense deep in his being of belonging to a place. He knew that wherever he went or however he might fare he would always be part of what he was leaving, and it would never be the same again.

Prelude to Chapter 5

The method taken in the following chapter is that of narrative interviewing, where I undertake a conversation with a local man, whom I call Séamus, about his experiences as a man born and bred in the remote edges of the western seaboard in Co. Galway. At the outset of this exercise, I was tempted to try to present some sort of visual or creative conversation-based text. I was full of great ideas as to how I would go about this and had quite a clear image of the finished product. However the representation of our conversations as dramatic interludes evolved quite naturally rather than being deliberately chosen, as I read over my notes and heard Séamus's lilting baritone voice in my head. As time went on and the ideas and the will to continue ebbed and flowed, I was left drifting and wondering how I was going to actually handle this segment. Finally it came to life. The shape of the conversation is represented by Séamus's voice on the right side of the page in the following font – *Séamus's voice*. I felt that this epitomised his age, generation, and his voice, and is actually quite close to his own handwriting. My own voice is symbolised on the left side of the page in the following font – *Patricia's voice*. I felt that this corresponded with a younger clearer voice, which was possibly less inclined to ramble or wander.

Chapter 5

Coming to 'The Promised Land', to Tír Tairngire

As I described in Chapters 1 and 2, the theme of 'community' is one which is close to my heart as I spend quite an amount of time involved in the community and voluntary sector locally. For me, the idea of 'belonging' is therefore a natural extension of community, and allows for exploration of ideas on who am I, where do I come from, and where is my base?

These questions are particularly relevant in this part of Ireland, where hundreds of families from the west of the country were given the opportunity to trade in their small acreage of poor and marginal land, for vastly superior farmland in counties Meath and Kildare. This 'transplantation' occurred mainly during the late 1930s and again in the 1950s under the 'Congested Districts Board', later becoming the 'Land Commission' (Robinson, 1990, Spellissy, 1999). Since the Great Famine of the 1840's, emigration was often the only option for inhabitants of these poorer lands. However the advent of the worldwide recession in the 1930's had made emigration more difficult and had virtually closed off that option. Therefore the opportunity offered by the Land Commission to relocate to the eastern side of the country, was akin to moving to the Promised Land, or Tír Tairngire in Gaelic. Often, whole townlands and small rural areas were virtually emptied in order to give greater opportunity to those remaining. A neighbour of mine is among those who gave up his small holding in coastal Connemara, County Galway, for rich and fertile land in County Meath. A native Irish speaker, Séamus Ó Cadhain, was born in south Connemara near Carna, where his family can trace its lineage back at least thirteen generations. He maintains a huge sense of belonging to that place, and its history, and has a huge genealogical memory of all the local families, of who is related to whom, and who moved to where, of the names of townlands, walls, piers, boats, graves, houses, and of the fields. Séamus moved to Meath with his mother, two of his younger sisters, and one younger brother. His father was already dead having

worked most of his adult life abroad. I had naively thought that this would be an easy piece of fieldwork to undertake, to gather a few quick notes and add to what I presumed I already knew about this move, include a few recordings of our conversations, write it up, and off I would go on my merry way. It was at this early stage of the journey that maps were cast aside and the SatNav reprogrammed. The following section attempts to contextualise the journey taken and how this links in with the approaches taken by more experienced travellers.

"Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first" (Fontana and Frey, 2005 p. 697). Although I live in close proximity to Séamus and had asked him months earlier to have a 'chat' about when he first moved from Galway to Meath during the 1950s, it actually took a considerable period of time for me to pick up the courage to approach him, and to co-ordinate our lives for a series of conversations. I could empathise with Ellis when she wrote of her difficulty in gathering the courage to schedule a session with her respondent, as in this case, I did not want Séamus to feel the subject of an investigation or analysis, as he is quite a reclusive personality and would find it difficult to be probed (Ellis, Kiesinger, and Tillmann-Healy, 1997). I also wondered if it would be easier to just find another interviewee, and then tortured myself wondering why I was so reluctant, and what may be holding me back. Mazzei (2007) writes of Laurel Richardson's ethnographic representation of field notes which also include her own silent interior monologue from the time of the dialogue, or conversation. Should I include here, my own fear and hesitation at hearing myself?

Considering the questions too sensitive to be asked, pondering what is said and what is not said, paying attention to what participants are saying and also paying attention to what may be silently voiced (Mazzei, 2007, p. 91).

Am I afraid of asking if his sense of belonging to this place has changed since his eldest son died and is now buried here? Does he feel that he should also be buried here with his son, rather than his previous hope of being in the family plot in

Connemara? Has his sense of duty and responsibility to his son's widow and children, who live very close to him, altered his sense of place? These questions are close to the bone for me too and I wonder what may emerge.

Before our sessions, I had thought Séamus would not speak of his brother, his only brother, a man whom I have never met, a man who has not set foot in Ireland since the 1970s. Colm 'disappeared' from the family long ago and left for America, and only occasionally makes contact through one of his nephews who works for the American Rail network. There was no great falling out or a row over land or ownership, just great distance and an emotional detachment which has grown over the decades. An unexpected part of our conversation touched on why Colm probably never felt connected with the small rural village in the rich soil of Co. Meath on the eastern side of Ireland, in that he came here when he was only 13 and was immediately sent to boarding school in Co. Galway,

to keep the Galway connection I suppose. Mary (sister) paid for it, but it was never a good idea, no, no never. He should have gone to school here in Trim, in Co. Meath, and he would have gotten to know all the local lads, he'd know them then.

I never hear a thing from him at all now. He was in California at one time.

*I got one phone call from there,
but nothing more,
no.*

Riesssman (2008) in her research with women in Southern India, writes of her struggles with translating dynamic conversation into linear written language, and of transforming a verbal exchange into some sort of representation in writing. In this situation, English is Séamus' second language and even now, almost 6 decades after he came to live in Co. Meath, the main tongue used around the house with his children and grandchildren, is Irish. Part of our discussions may be bi-lingual but merely an occasional peppering of Irish as I do not have the fluency and vocabulary to delve into topics with Séamus. His fluency and command of the English language is excellent, yet I can hear that he pauses and stalls a lot more in this language than when speaking in his mother tongue. Occasionally he may not be able to think of the equivalent word in English but could have several versions of the same word in Irish.

In our conversations, I was not so much interested in what the specifics of the moving process were, as in the outcomes for him in this new environment. I was also interested in exploring his relationship with his new community and also in his understanding of the perception of this move by his neighbours and former community in Connemara.

*Did you get to see this place here
before you left Galway?*

Ya, ya we did

Were you all brought up in a group or what?

*I got off the bus in Westland Row
in Dublin and was told to have
something in my hand (something to
identify himself with), and I was met
there and brought to Meath. There*

was another man who had seen the land before me, he had been up a day or two before. And he thought the land was too dry. And we went down to the bottoms you see, and there was a well on top of the ground, yeah? And I could see that there was plenty of water.

was the house here already or did they build houses on plots or what?

The houses were built. There was no electricity, no toilet, no indoor water, no nothing, you see.

And if that happened now, wouldn't it be fairly radical, I mean, whole villages, and groups of people being shifted from their place of origin and moved around the country . . . ?

Well there was a fella called Halloran who lived beside us at home. It was good for them (the old neighbours) because they could get a bit more land beside them when people moved. And true as God, when we moved, didn't he move up as well, yeah, up to 4 miles beyond Navan (the county town in Meath). I think they're all gone now though.

the old people all died, no one's left.

McDonagh, that was the lad who brought us up here, he would have stayed a night, and he went over to Connolly's, he would know them as well. The next thing, the following day, didn't he bring them all over, and the Hallorans as well, yeah, over here, and the gasur (children) all sat on the step around the fire there. That poor woman got a brain tumour after but she was a character around the area. But her mother and my father were first cousins. Yeah, and we'd no car til '64 'twas all walking and bicycles.

How did ye manage at all?

Tom Ward, always.

What did the neighbours think of ye, especially the ones across the road?

They were the best in the world, the best. You couldn't get better, yeah.

Could he (Tom Ward) have applied for more land here, instead of you blow-ins?

He did get land, up the other side of the hill. That was part of the farm Noel Collins is on, part of the Wiley estate. They had it years before us, his house was the herdsman's house you know, yeah. Collins and Tuites and Heffernans, all of them were 22 acres, 22 statutory acres. We got 35 and, and the Connollys got 35, (corrects himself) no, they got 32.

They were 4 years here before us, eventually it went up to 45. If you had the acreage in the west, you got it here.

The most people you would see around would be the Farrells, Jack, you know, Paddy's . . . yeah. And he would have tried to get more land himself, yeah. It was vexatious for him, he had lots of small kids that time. You couldn't make it up. And two or three others got sites down the Mill Road at that time. Nugent got two sites and she didn't want it at all. Anyway, Jack tried hard and had no luck.

He took that hard,
he did,

he did.

Do you think, would the neighbours have resented ye coming up here?

Well there was a lot of ruckus over there in Rathcairn⁹, oh yeah, yeah. Moreso over there, cos Dev (major political figure) was after coming in, Fianna Fáil, in '32 '33 and land was always associated with Fianna Gael and Cumann na nGael, and there was always big fighting over in Athboy.

Yeah somebody was telling me that before alright, 'oh they got our land and a donkey and we got nothing'.

Now you see, Connolly's got a horse, and Williams, on the main road. We got a cow, and she went down in the test, the first test I had in Meath. You see the TB test was well advanced in Carra but it hadn't started in Meath at all.

Did you get to bring up your cattle then?

Yeah yeah and the hens

⁹ Rathcairn in Co. Meath, a townland of 588 acres, amalgamated from 3 existing large estates, Heffernan's, Fissler's, and Maher's, created by the Land Commission in 1934. Over 440 people were settled there from the Connemara Gaeltacht, the Irish speaking area.

And you never had any hassle from the neighbours so?

No, no, never a squeak. There's one thing you discover about Meath people, they don't interfere with you, they won't walk in, you know. They wouldn't darken your door without a bye or leave.

Yeah I know what you mean, if I'd not gone up to that community meeting in the village all those years ago, I'd say I'd be still sitting over across the road twiddling me thumbs and would know no one. Maybe I'd be better off (laughs).

Tom Ward would walk in here you see, just walk in. Farrells, you know, they'd knock. All down the years, they'd knock.

Would you have got to know people as well around here if it wasn't for Tom Ward do you think? He seems to have been a great link man, a great neighbour.

He was going to the market every Tuesday, he sold pigs, you know. And sold them for others around

here too. He'd often have so many he'd have to make two runs up with the trailer, yeah. Well he knew them all up there, at the market and you'd get to meet loads of people. Oh yeah, he knew them all.

I wondered what the neighbours would make of it?

There was never anything, no, there really wasn't. As for that house (points across the road), no house where I grew up could be any better.

I never met Tom you know, he was dead before I came here. I got to know Rosie (his wife) though.

Oh Tom, gawd, Tom. I brought him to Maam Cross once (a big horse fair held in the middle of the bogs of Connemara every year at Halloween which is literally at a crossroads with only one pub on the landscape). The next thing I was looking for him and couldn't find him. I was looking in the bar and there was Tom and a crowd around him. Yeah. A crowd of codd fellas around him, yeah, for sure. That was Tom. Tom would shorten the day for you, no doubt about it. You went with the Wards and you got to know the

world. He couldn't get over how anyone could live there, in the bog, how could they live there at all? That was all he talked about, all the way back in the car to Meath. I told him with a straight face that the two fine fellas, Alcock¹⁰ and Brown, made a beeline straight for there when they crossed the Atlantic! Well Tom hadn't a clue you know, not a clue about that sort of thing. . . Oh I went to the Fairrhyouse races with him once, yeah, Rosie begged me to go with him. He'd been to Kilbeggan races the week before and he was, well you know, (makes weaving motions with his hands), doing a Jodie Connolly on it (a local drunk), and the following morning he was looking for the docket you know, the winning docket, he'd left it up in the shop. Oh there was war and cursing over that, oh yeah, there was surely . . .

This is a surprising twist in my journey and I have to remind myself of the accounts of others such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000). They note that the balance and

¹⁰ John Alcock and Arthur Brown, two British airmen who made the first non-stop transatlantic flight from America to Europe in 1919, crashlanding near Clifden, Co. Galway.

control can be formed by the participants where they shape their accounts of experience within a framework structured by themselves. In their work on oral histories, Anderson and Jack (1991) invite participants to tell their own stories in their own way, and illustrate how the attention is shifted from purely information gathering, to interaction and the potential to collaboratively construct oral history texts. This unexpected turn about the neighbouring couple, Rosie and Tom, who lived in the house where I now live, gives a different colour to the space I now inhabit. This place where their family, brothers and sisters were born and reared, the stories that were shared within these walls have mostly evaporated and all of those concerned have now died. Though I never met Tom and have never even seen his photo, I can clearly imagine him, and can almost hear his wheezy laugh and see the twitch in his jaw as he started to tell another tall tale to his audience. Tom was Séamus's link to this new place, his door-opener and conduit. He was the enabler who could tell the other neighbours that this fella was alright, this 'blow-in' was a good man, a good upstanding person, who spoke funny and played 'diddley aye' or traditional Irish music. As a born and bred native, he had a 'taken for granted' knowledge of small rural village in south Meath and its people, which he let out in dribs and drabs. The fact that Séamus could take all this in and remember it was a huge part of his getting to know the area and its people.

*And do you ever think you'd see
yourself as a Meath man*

No, I'm not a Meath man!

*Isn't it gas, and I still answer
Galway when I'm asked where
I'm from I always do that, and
I'm nowhere as long out of it as
you.*

*Depends on where are you from or
where do you live . . .*

The conversation then turns and drifts into a discussion on all the people who are related to each other locally, or who think they are, and of how many of those who do not know how they are connected, only that they are cousins somehow. As someone who can recount and trace back the family lineage through 13 generations, Séamus expresses incredulity at the lack of knowledge of family connection within his adopted homeplace.

Patsy Farrell knew everything about everybody, and yet he didn't even know his grandmother's surname! Yeah, isn't that gas.

Mickey Hehir (my paternal grandfather) was the same, he didn't know his grandmother's name either.

But the McDonaghs, Flaherty's, Reilly's, all them, you know who are because of the names. You can go right back, but if that was English speaking, that wouldn't happen, no. There were four sets of McDonagh's back in Carna and not one of them related, no, not one. And still you could follow them all back through the names.

Our discussion continues along the theme of names and following family lines through the often multiple names given to the various generations. This is very typical in the Gaeltacht, or traditional Irish speaking areas in the west of Ireland and other Gaeltacht areas around the country. For example, it is customary to use the

first name, followed by the father's name, followed by the paternal grandfather's name. Therefore Séamus, son of Liam, son of Micheál, would be known as Séamus Liam Mhicheál. This is particularly useful in areas where certain surnames dominate, such as O'Keeffe's in Kerry, Gallagher's in Donegal, or Murphy's in Wexford. I find that I am very envious of this depth and level of inherited knowledge and information, knowledge of the family line that has been lost to so many of us, including within my own family where my mother's paternal history seems to disappear with her grandfather.

What about the neighbours back home? Did you miss them or did they miss you do you think? Or did they resent ye for leaving them, for deserting them maybe?

No, no it wasn't like that. They got more land and space so no. Mother would have missed it more. . . She did miss it all the same.

There were those who missed us alright, oh there were, yeah, but shure . . .

Though this particular conversation did not go into any further depth, as a neighbour of Séamus, I am aware of his interactions and the family connections within the local community over the years. This small rural village in south Meath is a very close knit one, with three or four main family groupings who are all interconnected through marriage and kinship over the generations. With a small population of under 350 in the village and its hinterland, any 'blow-in' is immediately identifiable, and although welcoming to newcomers, there are kinship

and other boundaries which locals are very protective of, and which are very difficult for outsiders to breach. Factors which would potentially increase the opportunities for inclusion in the local community might include attendance at the small primary school, involvement in the parish hurling team, or even partaking in a pint or two at either of the local hostelrys. However these possible openings were not availed of by Séamus's family, in either his generation or his children's. However as a very good traditional musician, a gift which he passed on to his family, there were occasions for local involvement such as Church events and small gatherings, and thus the family became well known and highly respected as the 'musicianers'. Even though the locals might have had difficulty in pronouncing the family surname, everyone knew who they were talking about through the musical connection. The concept of the meitheal, noted in chapter 1, where neighbours worked together as a team to help share the tasks and equipment needed to plant and harvest crops, was also a vital part of the integration process for Séamus, and he was well renowned for being a strong and willing worker in his youth. So the question I want to ask but have not got the courage nor the words to articulate, is if he feels he has been assimilated into the community, if he feels part of this newly adopted landscape, if he feels a sense of belonging here? Within me, I have the gut instinct that he will respond in either the affirmative or the negative without enlargement, and that I am aware of not being prepared for his response if he says no. It creates too much of a space, a vacuum perhaps of over 60 years which I have neither the skills nor expertise to navigate with him. Instead I cast my net in another direction.

*And would you ever see yourself
going back, could you ever see
yourself back there in the west?*

*To stay in it?
No, I wouldn't.
No, no . . .*

No.

Why not, are you too long gone out of it?

I don't know what it is, I suppose
I'm too settled where I am now, no.
(long pause) It'd be nice to be beside a
pier I suppose . . .

and beside boats . . .

and looking at the sea.

And any time of the day, I
suppose, when you see a rock, and
the tide so far up on it and so far
down on it. All that kind of thing
you grew up with, the sea and the
wind and the weather, and it
doesn't matter wherever you go, you
never forget those sort of things,
no.

I miss the tide more so than the
mountains.

Yeah, it would be nice alright

and I hear the longing, sadness and resignation in his voice as he reaches for the paper and starts to pick out something he thinks will interest me from the obituaries section as a signal for closure.

Prelude to Fragment 1

As briefly alluded to in Chapter 1, many authors have used fictional characters to explain complex ideas, for example Speedy (2008). For my own purposes, along this journey in Fragment 1, I will also briefly delve into such a character, a tree, or a great Ent, the memory of which remained with me from my earliest reading of the *Lord of the Rings* as a child (Tolkien, 1986). The part of their journey where Merry and Pippin first encounter this timeless ancient tree, which could think and speak and move, has fascinated me always. The motivation for using an oak tree, or 'an darach mór' as it is called in the Irish language, as a sort of centrepiece for this exploration stems partly from my own fascination with trees; an enchantment stemming from childhood, from the many hours spent hiding away in lofty branches dreaming and reading, in proving to myself that I was 'one of the lads' and scrambling to ridiculous heights in reckless self-endangerment; in their longevity, their variety and in their versatility. Wood itself is a material which permeates our lives from the cots which capture us as babies, the chairs on which our posteriors perch, the tables on which we lean daily, the crisp and crimple of paper, the crackle and hiss of burning logs, and finally, when our day is done, it is wood which mingles with us as we decay into the earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The tree therefore is a witness to the change and movement experienced by the small rural village near which I now live, where my children grow and thrive, and where I hope that I am contributing in some small way towards the life of this community. I had hoped to engage the two actors in this piece, the tree and birdy, in dialogue, similar to the role of the Swallow and the Happy Prince in Oscar Wilde's evocative children's story (Wilde, 1993), to interpret and discuss the exploration of the themes of research being undertaken. However the writing at this stage of its creation, did not yield to my urgings, and thus the tree remains as a sentinel at its post in the heart of the village, with birdy a silent companion to its observations and musings. Instead, I engage the darach mór in conversation at the end of my exploration in chapter 7 as we reflect, and navigate where the threads have lead us, and what the journey and stories have meant.

Fragment I

At the Crossroads

Magnificent and grand I prevail, centrepiece of this rustic village, where two thoroughfares intersect; one searching and seeking to find a way westwards, towards the setting sun, the other cleaving it straight through as if to halt its progress. How old am I now birdy? Is it long I am here? Surely it must be, for I have seen so much, heard so much, felt so much.

They were thinkin' of getting rid of me so they were birdy. Imagine that, getting rid of me, "to widen the road" they said. "Health and Safety measures". That's what I heard the man from the council saying when he was here. "Health and Safety". He was under there, just under there, standing with some of those community group people, good people, only wantin' to improve the place, to make it even nicer than it is. Shure amn't I the heart and soul of the village! If I wasn't here the place wouldn't look right. Anyway where would I go, where would they put me? They could cut me down, but I'd still be around so I would. I'm big I know but, no, they couldn't.

I can see over the wall of Regan's there across the road, that lovely big house, and into the Protestant graveyard, across the other side. I'm nearly up to the height of the spire so I am, but sure that's not very tall now. I remember when that place belonged to the other crowd so I do. I remember the big fire and they cried because all the records of the living and the dead were destroyed. All gone up in flames. Gone.

Do you see the holes in me there birdy, down low there, from the ambush during the troubled times? And the place there on that branch where they hung the men who betrayed their neighbours to the Black and Tans, look

there. There's the seat where all the young lads gathered before their hurling matches, testing the strength of their blows and the power of their puck on my vast trunk. A fine team we had then birdy, a fine team. So many of them gone though, gone off to far away places, over yonder.

Where have you been today birdy? Anywhere nice? What's going on at all around here? Tell me. There was once a time when I could hear whispers from the far end of the village, from Sweeney's walk, right along by the church, past the post office and even the rumbles and grumbles from Harnan's pub, all past the other church, around the corner and down as far as the playing field, past Anne McGee's fine stables. All the whispers, all the secrets, all were mine as I gathered them in my boughs and leaves, embraced them, protected them and kept them intact. Oh birdy it was so hard to hear them there for a long while, all that noise, boomboom bang rattleshooosh whoop pingboomh. All that racket, all those cars, all those big lorries laden with gravel from the quarry. The quarry that's deeper than the tallest height of any tree known around here, yes birdy, deeper and darker. Down to the big lake that's under all in this village and the next village and the next. I can feel it birdy and it's not good, not good at all, no. Trucks, four score and ten of them, used to leave that quarry every day and traipse back and forth so that the little people could hardly cross the road to get their milk and paper. That big hole of nothingness, of emptiness, all gone now surely, finished. All those houses built with blocks and infill and cement from that vast place. Empty echoing shells now, their hearths cold, never to feel the heat of a warm fire, their doors locked, never to open and welcome, their rooms vacant, never to be filled with bustle and commotion, love and friendship, built instead with greed and hollow promises and impossible debt.

No one sits and talks under my boughs anymore, no, not like their grandparents, and their great-grandparents and those before them again. All too busy, too quick, too late. Ah yes, the little people, they come and go birdy, they come and go. But we're still here aren't we little birdy, we're still here.



Prelude to Chapter 6

In this chapter, my own voice is presented as a series of fragments which are rhizomatic in nature. The metaphor of the rhizome appeals to me especially as it has no distinct beginning or end, it is always in the middle, between things. It can be interrupted, shattered at a given point, but it will revive again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. It does not burden my thinking or writing, but like a toolbox full of levers and gizmos (Massumi, cited in St. Pierre, 1997, p. 407), it frees me up to make some moves in many possible directions. The first of these segments depicts the emotional tone of isolation when telling parents of an unplanned pregnancy. This is depicted by my own voice on the left side of the page in small font as follows; *like this*, with the atmosphere and inner thoughts portrayed in the middle in slightly larger font; *in this way*, with the parents voice as bold capitals on the very right side of the page; **in this manner**.

The second segment is illustrated as a third party depiction of my inner thoughts, feelings and emotions while going through the rupturing of a fundamental relationship in my adult life. Another voice, sometimes doubting, sometimes critical, an inner nagging, censorious tone, is portrayed in bold on the far right side of the page.

Segment three is represented as a short description of an event which happened in my late teens and which had an impact on the direction and career path which I followed after graduating from University. It was one of my first direct encounters with such extreme poverty, exclusion and isolation and also had quite an effect on me personally.

The final segment formed part of a presentation which was carried out on the final day of participating in the Visual Inquiry module during 2010. It is brief and jumbled, and it was accompanied at the time by the creation of a small stuffed doll

figure. To this figure I had added many arms, which ended up looking like one of the Hindu goddesses, Parvati, who is represented with up to 18 limbs, signifying what I perceived to be my role as a woman, trying to fit in, trying to do everything for everyone, and juggling a multiplicity of tasks.

Chapter 6

Womens' Stories – Scealtaí na Mná

Segment 1

The present tense of the verb 'to be' refers only to the present: but nevertheless with the first person singular in front of it, it absorbs the past which is inseparable from it. 'I am' includes all that has made me so. It is more than a statement of immediate fact, it is already biographical (Berger, 1972, p. 370).

As a fledgling writer and researcher, how do I get the message across to the reader that this is what actually happened? Why is this next episode important or necessary to include? It is really more about the tension between conforming to expected norms and the fear of exclusion and isolation. Where this following piece is factual, it has been shaped and dramatized to create a rendering of events rather than a bald telling of a very raw story with far reaching tentacles (Barone, 2000). As Berger (1972) describes above, this segment is part of what makes me who I am. It is a part of my personal story, a story in which the words of Freeman (1993) have great resonance for me when he says that it is not difficult to reflect that such work may be of value to someone other than myself. I am also drawn to the words of Church (1995) when she describes how her exploration of the personal, private and emotional dimensions of research can be challenging to the male-dominant practises in an academic environment, and counters that perspective by suggesting that such research can also be public, theoretical and rational. Like her, I understand that the self is a social phenomenon, which is filled with the voices of other people.

Therefore writing about myself is a way of writing about these others and about the worlds which we create/inhabit . . . because my subjective experience is part of the world, the story which emerges is not completely private and idiosyncratic (Church, 1995, p. 5).

In the early 1990s in Ireland, pregnancy before marriage while not uncommon, was certainly not advertised loudly in public. I have very vivid memories of 1983, when a young girl, Ann Lovett, my own age exactly, gave birth near a grotto in the centre of Granard, a small Midlands' town. Both mother and baby son were tragically found dead early the following day. In the same decade, a school teacher based in Co. Wexford was fired from her position after it became known that she was pregnant. She was unmarried. This was another era, the time before Bishop Eamon Casey¹¹ was found to have fathered a son, before Fr. Michael Cleary¹² was discovered to have been living intimately with his housekeeper for years and had also fathered a child; both of these charismatic men the 'Ant and Dec'¹³ of the emerging modern Catholic church and star hosts of the Pope's visit to Ireland in 1979. The influence and power of the Church on Irish society cannot be underestimated, holding moral sway over areas such as modesty, chastity, virginity, piety, sobriety and obedience, up until arguably, the end of the last century (Inglis, 1998). This era was in the dying days of the Catholic Church's claw like grip on every aspect of ordinary citizen's lives, particularly those of women, and before a saga of scandals was unleashed on the unknowing public. The Murphy report, the Ryan report, damning indictments to the horrors of cover ups of child abuse and the misery of 20th century slavery in the mother and baby homes, had not fully reared their heads. The gaunt shadow of De Valera¹⁴ was still lingering, a lynchpin in Irish political and social life since 1916. I have attempted to 'show' rather than 'tell', recreating a sort of interrupted 'scenic method' described by Agar (1995). No effort has been made in being descriptive. Instead, energy has been

¹¹ Bishop Eamon Casey was a charismatic church figure who was bishop in the diocese of Kerry and Galway Kilmacduagh until 1992, when it was revealed that he had fathered a son with Annie Murphy, an American woman from Connecticut.

¹² Fr. Michael Cleary, also known as the singing priest, was another powerful and influential character in the Catholic Church in Ireland throughout the 80's, with his own phone in radio show and TV chat show.

¹³ Ant and Dec, two popular British TV hosts on programmes such as 'Britain's got Talent', 'I'm a Celebrity, get me out of here'.

¹⁴ Eamon De Valera was a prominent politician and statesman in 20th century Ireland, serving in positions as head of state and head of government over his long life span in public service.

spent on the emotional tone, in involving the reader in the immediacy and tension of the experience.

In the Kitchen - 1991

*Her gut constricts.
She is standing in the kitchen at home, petrified,
sick, fear frozen tears.
Weak at the elbows and knees.
This moment has been put off for many weeks,
months, but can be for no longer.
Time is moving on.
Soon she will begin to show.*

“We’re going to be parents”

*Deathly silence from father
Gasp
Shudder
Deflating mother*

**“WHAT ABOUT MY STANDING
IN THE COMMUNITY?
ARE YOU SURE?
MAYBE IT’S A MISTAKE
DID YOU GO TO THE DOCTOR TO CHECK?”**

“There’s no mistake.
I’m nearly 5 months gone”

*Unspoken, unsayable, unspeakable.
The neighbours must never know, must never
even guess.
What would they think?
The devout Catholic family with the daughter in
trouble.*

**“AND I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOIN’ TO
TELL US SOMETHING NICE, LIKE YOU’D
GOTTEN ENGAGED OR SOMETHIN’.
WELL, WHEN ARE YE GETTIN’ MARRIED ANYWAY”**

“There’ll be no weddin’, well, not yet anyway”

*Silence
Did such silence ever have the quality of dust,
of thick suffocating heavy smothering dust,
constricting and deathly?*

**“NO WEDDIN’?
NO WEDDIN’?”**

“No”

*What a powerful word, tiny, but massive
“No”*

**“YOU’VE GONE AND RUINED YOUR LIFE SO YOU HAVE,
RUINED IT!”**

“No we haven’t!
It’s just different now, so it is”

“THAT UNCLE OF MINE MUST NEVER KNOW!

**CAN YOU JUST HEAR WHAT HE WOULD SAY,
AND WHAT WOULD GRANNY HAVE SAID,
THE LORD BE GOOD TO HER.
THANK GOD SHE ISN'T AROUND FOR THIS!?"**

*That uncle,
'The Boar',
a suffocating presence always,
sarcastic, snide, sneering,
never a pleasant or good word to say about
anyone,
absolutely ruthless with the scythe of his
tongue on those who strayed outside of
convention, of those who didn't conform,
bitter towards those who wandered beyond the
boundaries of what was acceptable or 'normal'
in holy Catholic rural Ireland.
Oh yes, The Boar would only love to have this
tasty morsel to fire back at the niece.
He would roll it around on his tongue and spit
it out from between his yellowing teeth,
exhaling slowly, as he sat like a lord in his
grand chair
reigning from the prime spot in his brother's
kitchen.*

**"HUH, SHURE WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT
FROM THE LIKES OF THEM!"**

*The wonderous irony of his funeral a few short
years later,
and he blissfully ignorant of the 'great
misfortune' to befall the family,
a funeral where his niece and her daughter,
among a handful of others who listened with
their mouths down around their ankles in
amazement,
as the priest lamented the loss of such a good
man,
a man who cared greatly for his family,
for his community,
a great man altogether,
a man who was devout and attended mass in
hail, rain or snow,
a man who said his prayers and worked hard
all the days of his life.
The further incredulity when a month after he
was laid in the ground,
a woman arrives at the door of his niece,*

*a woman with an English accent whose mother
had come from down the road,*

“THAT OUL QUARE CROWD DOWN THE BOREEN”

*a woman whose mother had slipped off to
England in hushed hurried circumstances
five decades earlier.*

**“THOSE SORT OF WANS,
HUSSEYS!”**

His own flesh

His own daughter



Segment 2

Richardson (1997) writes of how honouring the location of the self can act as a valuable creative analytical practice. She also speaks of loosening the shadow hold of painful experience through writing her own story, reliving her often horrific experiences, but releasing the anger and pain, revealing that these experiences can be the shape makers of our lives that we can choose to confront, embrace or ignore (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005). Personal narratives can often become demeaned as some sort of victim art or confessional, even though the purpose may be to devictimise the stigmatised identity and to humanise tragic or difficult experiences by bearing witness to what it means to live with shame, abuse, addiction, or in this story, the rupture of a fundamental relationship in my adult life (Bochner, 2000). As we noted in chapter 3, the genre of autoethnography allows for the personal and the autobiographical as a legitimate site for research into self and culture, which is rich lode of potential meaning making between reader and writer. Furthermore this segment includes other features of autoethnography as outlined by Ellis (1997, 1999), such as sociological introspection, emotional recall, and the inclusion of the researcher's vulnerable self. While the story may be created by the teller, it is however always created in relation to a particular audience, and therefore the reading become an active rather than a passive process, where readers can feel, see, taste, smell, care and desire (Bochner and Ellis, 1996; Frank, 1995; Tsang, 2000).

It is with these thoughts in mind that I have a sense of feeling somewhat fraudulent in terms of my own story, a story which from the outside, does not appear to be particularly traumatic. Indeed, it possibly comes across as relatively banal and somewhat self-indulgent. This is not a story of great crisis; this is not exposure for the sake of exposure (Behar, 1996). I have not tried to be clever in terms of conceits used, not have I tried to create a story or dramatized non-fictional episode. This piece simply evolved from sitting at the kitchen table, night after night, gazing

blearily into the computer screen, willing words to flow from my fingers, from my head and my heart. For ages, nothing answered, nothing came. Then one evening, unprovoked, they began to spill slowly, painfully, swelling and ebbing onto the page. I debated long and hard about whether to then include the piece within this dissertation. I struggled and toyed with pressing the delete button. Feeling for me that to be true to the task which I had set out to achieve, that of seeking greater self-knowledge in order to understand my personal life and feelings of isolation, loneliness and de-anchoring, my own place and where I belong, and recognising how these are partly created by the sociocultural context in which I live, I finally relented, letting it go ahead.

In the Kitchen – 2012

*Sadness, weariness seep from her,
drip and dweep and creep from her,
through her head,
through her hands,
her elbows,
down through into the grain of the wood.
Altar of the home, centre of the kitchen, anchor of the familial flurry and commotion.*

*Witness to joy, to sorrow,
to angry words, hot words,
and to no words at all.*

*Present for all the large family gatherings,
the Christenings, the birthdays, the house dance nights,
laden with goodies, with pies and cakes, with steaming stews and bakes,
the savoury and the sweet, host to all that is bountiful.*

*Creaking under all the studious elbows,
joints creased in concentration,
wrinkled with pre-exam pressure,
thumped with frustration, with exultation,
pinpricked with biro, compasses, stained, burned, waxed and unwaxed, dimpled and cracking.*

*Yet ever steady and constant
Solid and comforting
Alive and present, uncomplaining and resilient.*

*Audience of one to yet another lonely night,
the performances exclusive,
lines and scripts which should be said to another,
must be said, but which will probably remain unsaid and unsayable.*

*Thoughts and feelings, unexpressed,
the unthinkable and incomprehensible,
the impossible and the unresolved.*

*Wouldn't she love it if this was the night she had the courage, courage to say the words.
The words that might free her,
the words that might finish her.*

But no. No, not tonight.

*She's not bold
She's not brave
She's not strong*

*She had them earlier alright.
They were there, right inside her mouth, just behind her lips,
ready to erupt, to flow and bubble, ready to be heard and tasted.
But no, the hour grows late, and the words grow tired of waiting, waiting.*

*They start to slip away, to ooze back down, down into her gullet,
past her spleen, past her stomach and nestle themselves back into their safe secure places deep down
inside.*

*No, not tonight, it can wait.
The next night, he'll be in better form, he'll be able to hear what she's saying.*

*He might respond
He might understand
He might listen*

*Apathy
Indifference*

*The two greatest murderers of joy, of bubbling excitement,
of spontaneity, of wonderment,
of relief, of disappointment,
of making plans together, of looking to the future,
of shared conversations, of jovial banter,
of discussions on stuff other than "who's pickin' up the kids from school tomorrow?"*

*What she wouldn't give to be embraced warmly, to be caressed lovingly,
to feel the brush of soft words whispered onto her skin
to even have her hand held.*

But no, nothing,

Emotional Absence.

Distance.

Isolation.

Silence.

More chance of action in a nuns graveyard after breakfast!

And she feels her own heart starting to seize up, to strangle and tangle around itself, wrapping itself up, intent on self-preservation, on self-control.

She feels like the traipsing trio wandering through the magical land of Oz;

the lion searching for his courage,

the tin man seeking a heart,

and the scarecrow, wondering is there any chance of finding a brain.

Where has her brain gone to, what has she been doing all these years, what does she think she's at, doing that course beyond in Bristol? She didn't do particularly well in the Leaving Certificate, didn't get a great degree, scraping by, just about.

What is she at?

Following the yellow brick road? Yes, following the yellow brick road!

Seeking to find the way home,

Well Toto, there's no place like it, so it was said

Where is home now anyway?

Is it here anymore, is it back in the West, is it in a place not yet ventured?

Hoping,

Wishing,

Yearning to find the words, the answer.

Sometimes that road can be clear and bright, shining like polished gold in front of her.

At other times, dim and dull, hidden and ensnared in the bindweed of self-doubt,

Darkened with loneliness, potholed with self-pity, mired in "what if's."

Where to now? Where are the yellow bricks pointing?

*The first proper paying job in many years, years spent childrearing at home.
Time not regretted, but time which could have been used better perhaps.
This job seems to be going well, very well. She has made herself somewhat indispensable.*

No one is indispensable

*She knows that.
But no one else around seems to have the qualifications or personality or breadth of experience to
do what she does, to bring what she can bring, which makes a difference to the changing landscape
of further education.
So has she finally found her compass, has she uncovered the map?*

*She is clearing the way ahead with a quill and ink, with a mobile and a laptop.
Maybe the dots are starting to join up.
Maybe at last there seems to be a clearer purpose to all the years of hodge podge bitty work
all of this might now actually start to make sense
and come together to form a pattern*

***Maybe
Just maybe ...***

She might just find her way

▪

Autumn 2017

Any clearer?

Any nearer?

Any Where?

Segment 3

The 'In the Tunnels' piece has deeply resonated with me in terms of where my hibernating sense of social justice and community first sparked and took flame. I cannot definitively say that this was a pivotal moment in my adult life, or an epiphany of sorts, the turn which made me decide to become involved in adult education, in community development, with issues of equality of opportunity, in challenging issues of social exclusion, and of striving for justice and fairness. However it is a key deciding factor, and something which had niggled at the back of my mind for quite a while. It was certainly a point in which the caul was lifted from my eyes, where my skin of complacency and sensitivities were peeled raw, and where I was shaken mightily to my core. Revisiting this event which is something which has lain dormant at the back of my consciousness for over three decades, it is akin to Ellis's 'identity and meaning making' experience (Ellis, 1995). It is this whole train of experiencing which began to launch me on a process which is both exhilarating and at times a little overwhelming; of being carried in a direction which appears to be forward, towards goals which can be dimly defined, as I try to at least understand the current meaning of that experience (Ellis, 1995; Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Whatever dormant inklings of wanting to work in this field and in particular with socially excluded groups, those given labels, such as, the long term unemployed, those with mental health difficulties, lone parents, homeless people, and those living on the margins of society, were sparked into life by this episode. It also allows me to encapsulate the other great passion in my life, that of choral singing. I identify this as one of my communities, and it is, and hopefully will continue to be for a very long time, a key place of belonging for me. Diversi (1998), when writing about the short story, notes that this genre has the unique potential to bring abstract sterile and otherwise distant social realities close to the reader. Frank (2000) observes that the representation of research as fiction has the power to engage the feelings of the reader and involve them at an emotional level. While

not claiming that this writing has done so, it certainly has resurrected my memories of what it was like to be untethered, to be loose and free to roam the world, unexplored and full of adventure and promise. Yet always knowing that I had a place to return to, a place to call home.

In the Tunnels

Boisterous, loud, rambunctious 18-20 year olds, on the cusp of adulthood, still within our cocoons and nests. All of us let loose in central Paris with glee, fresh from our performances at an International Choral Festival for student Chamber Choirs in nearby Versailles. We were from all walks of life, all spectrums of colour, in so much as there was colour in the Ireland of the 80's, in the 'Age of Bland'; shades of pink and pale, rust and grey, speckles and freckles, from rural Kerry, West Connemara, the whiff of brine and salt on hair and clothes, smoggy central Dublin and the suburbs of the capital, Midlands mist and bog. Hungry, with no money for decent grub, "Let's busk in the Metros". "Right so!" and we huffle off down into the bowels of Paris, its entrails shiny and bright.

The tunnels echo with sounds, breezes hot and dry flush through, trains whizz by at speed and suck the breath away; smells and scents permeate, of heat and damp, of must and cigarettes, of engines and stale urine and other impenetrable odours.

We find a spot, a good spot from which to perform. A protest, mumbling and growling rises from behind, down low. No time to investigate, all eyes on the conductor, as we concentrate, focus, connect, the hum of anticipation, hear the note, the signal and then, the intake of breath. We pause, connect to the core, feel the note before it arises and comes to life. Still louder, the protesting mewls from behind and below. Ignore it. Block it out. Fluid clear tones mingle in the wonderful acoustic of those underground caverns; the coffee tones of the tenors; underpinning, the reassuring rumbles of the basses; liquid caramel alto flavours, all pitched under the spiralling sparkle of sopranos, true, gliding, soaring. Sounds melange and swirl, footsteps falter, chattering voices cease around us, faces, once anxious, are now expectant, looking towards us, voices are hushed. I glance behind and then I see him, the man with no legs, lying behind us, below us. Pained eyes flooded with tears, moist with recollection, with unrequited longing, with regret, "Angels, angels from heaven, come to me at last" he gasps.

We finish.

Huge applause, the tinkle of coins being dropped, slowly at first, then rapid in succession. A shower, a good shower. I turn fully then, in shock, guilt and horror wrack me. For he is below, buried in the briar patch of my consciousness far down, away and beyond my experience, my cushioned and cosseted juvenile existence, my ivory tower

upbringing where everyone who had grown up around me was the same as me, had the same sort of house as me, went to the same school as me, had a similar family set up as me, more or less. But not this, I had never seen this, experienced this, touched this. What had brought him to this, how could this happen, who was responsible? Questions, conflict, indignation flood my head. And here are we, who have taken his space, evicted him from his audience, colonised his territory.

I am redundant, unable to speak. Shame heats my face, I look to the others, who all nod in accord, and I thrust the red canvas bag, laden with coins onto his outstretched hands. He presses back resisting. “No, no!” I am appalled. He must accept the guilt price. For he is the sacrificial lamb.

Running, running away from his tears, his pleas . . .

I

am

legless

Postlude

I’ve been in the tunnels. My ears have been bombarded with echoes, clashing noises, screeching, faces and voices everywhere. I’m moving towards the entrance, towards the freshness and the light, where I may more clearly see, more earnestly listen, more truly be. The axis has shifted, and I have wobbled, but

I’m

still

standing.

Segment 4

The following piece evolved from an activity which took place on the EdD Visual Inquiry unit in which I participated. I had not originally intended to include this particular piece, and in later drafts, had meant it to be a sort of interlude between the three previous main segments and the Mother story. However, as I kept going back to it and fleeting past it while scrolling and navigating throughout the writing process, I decided to include this piece as an entity in its own right, giving her a rightful place in the script.

‘Parvati’ Woman

I write as a woman

I must have many hands

I am the schizophrenic woman, trying to be everything to everyone, all the time

The mother – birthing, feeding, burping, cleaning, driving, screeching, wiping, making, washing, baking, sensing, nurturing, counselling, guiding, holding, hearting, loving, frustrating

The maker – making, creating, planning, finding, cutting, sawing, sewing, nailing, sanding, polishing, finishing, admiring, criticising

The musicianer – playing, composing, singing, chorusing, harmonising, fantasising

The educator – teaching, facilitating, negotiating, delegating, working, meeting, writing, organising, planning, reporting, researching, struggling, fitting, shifting, earning, resigning

The cooker – peeling, grating, chopping, buying, broiling, frying, inventing, recreating, burning

The gardener – digging, planting, pruning, pricking, seeding, supporting, dividing, layering

The lover – trying, caring, crying, failing, striving, succeeding, changing, holding, releasing, accommodating, compromising, trying, seducing, losing, plucking, beautifying, exfoliating, shaving, empathising, seeing, hearing, listening, screaming, dreaming, desiring, despairing, hoping, wishing, pleading, needing, growing, shrinking

The Parvati Woman, the goddess of the many hands, busy destroying evil and protecting humankind from pain and suffering

The 'I' woman

The 'your' woman

The 'his' woman

The 'their' woman

The 'who's' woman?

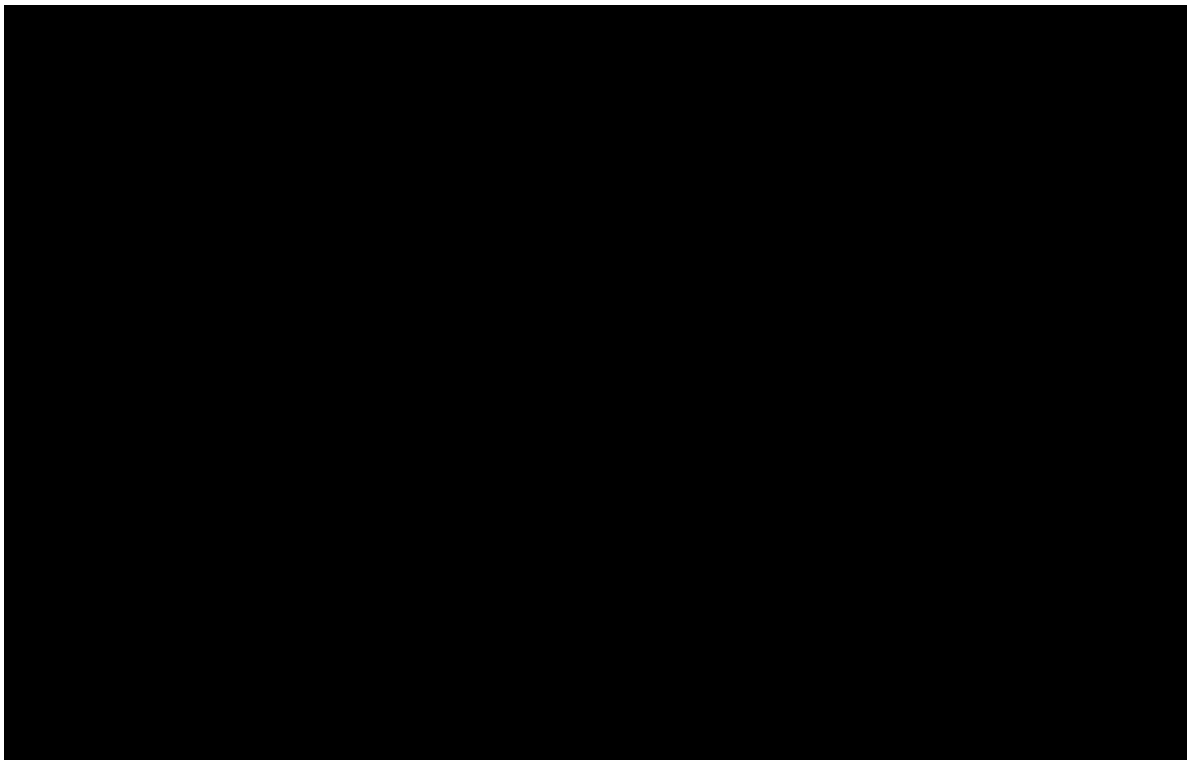
The 'finding' woman

The 'becoming' woman

The 'being' woman

Woman

Me



Prelude to Segment 5 – Mother Story

The Mother story is expressed as the internal fragmented thought processes and reminiscences of my own recently departed mother, as she lies on her sick bed after having being diagnosed with terminal cancer. In this, she reminisces and recollects on her childhood and youth, her life as a good daughter, mother, sister, wife and all the duties and responsibilities that are part and package of undertaking those roles, and on life and death and many of the spaces in between. There is nothing fictional in this account, neither is it chronological in its structure. Instead, it is literally my recollections of various threads and fragments of her stories as told to me over the years, and particularly in her last months as we spent precious time together from her diagnosis to her untimely death.

Mother story

I suppose I'll see my father again, there . . . in the next place . . . He was the same age as I am now when he died, fancy that, the same age and all. Me poor ol' father, shur I hardly knew him at all. He was gone away long before I was born, I suppose I was lucky to be born at all, a surprise I'd say I was! Shur the two sisters are years older than me. He must have been back visiting. Poor mother, all she had to put up with, no husband, I suppose they were separated, they were, I know, wasn't it terrible. Divorce Irish style, that's the way it was. The man would leave, off working, in his case, at a big important job with the Civil Service in Dublin, livin' the high life he was. Shur I couldn't tell anyone, never told my friends, it would only be too embarrassing and shockin'. I hardly told Pat¹⁵ when we were still courtin', I thought he'd leave me too if he knew, oh I was so afraid. Shur he said he didn't give a damn, he wasn't marrying the rest of them, he only wanted me. Oh the relief!! Wasn't I so lucky to find Pat, there were a couple of nice lads who used to write to me and bring me to the dances, but they were nothing serious, nothing important. The first thing I noticed about him were his shoes, they were lovely and clean and shiny, so I reckoned he wasn't a labourer, and then I looked up and saw his eyes, lovely clear blue honest eyes, and I knew I could trust him, and I knew he wouldn't let me down. We were friends first for ages, and he used to try to set me up with some of his friends. Ah they were grand but I wasn't interested. Then one day, he turned up at the door of the digs I was staying in, and straight away I asked "well, who is it now that you've lined up for me?" Well he shuffled and stuttered, and finally said, "well, how about me actually?" I was so delighted I just said "yes" straight away, and that was that! Imagine I could have missed him, cos I was half thinking of heading off to Australia around then, they would

¹⁵ Pat, her husband of 50 years and 5 months.

pay you £10 to go over then, £10! Isn't it gas, and now they will hardly let you in without papers this and papers that . . .

Is it time for those tablets yet? What time is it loveen? I'm sorry I'm an awful bother to you . . .

Ah the time away working in London was lovely, though lonely at times, I missed Mother, and would think of her a lot, in the hardship and loneliness, all of us away, and there she was stuck with the two ould brothers. Well at least Amby was grand, kind and gentle, never a cross word and they were a good team, shur she managed the farm for him, otherwise it would have all probably gone wallop, the poor ould divil, shur he couldn't organise anything, not with those cursed blackouts he used to get. Only for him though we'd have had no place to live, no home, nothing, nowhere . . . out on the side of road like the tinkers otherwise, no, he was very kind he was. That other uncle though . . . well God be good to him and all the Holy Souls but he was an awful yoke all the same. Never did a tap of work in his life, though he did spend some time 'working' in England, or so we were told. I dunno, he was useless, worse than useless, he was contrary, bad tempered, cranky always, and never a good word to say about anyone, got up at all hours, would never help out on the farm, and was waited on hand and foot by myself and mother, and seemed to think that we should be grateful for doing it. Wasn't that some land we got when his daughter turned up after his funeral, him, of all people, with a daughter born outside of the sheets. That was some turnup for the books alright, and he the biggest Holy Joe of them all, pontificating about everybody else and what shenanigans they were up to, and he cavorting with that poor lassie from beyond the village, and when she disappeared years ago, there was no word of where she had gone. The poor girleen, off to have that baby on her own, away in England. Probably in a convent somewhere,

and all because that our bags wouldn't own up to her and stand up for her and do the decent thing. But I won't speak ill of the dead, no, no, God be good to them all, God bless their Holy Souls, I'll be there meself soon too, I suppose, too soon . . .

Ah but working in London in the 60's was great all the same. I never forget getting off the bus and seeing the crowds and crowds of people everywhere, every sort of person you could imagine, all shapes, sizes and colours. I had never seen a black person before, imagine that, there was nothing only white, pink and freckled faces around Killimor¹⁶! And all the Indians and Chinese with their wonderful clothes, oh we were so envious.

No I didn't have any truck with those clubs or following bands or that stuff, groupies, was that what they were called? I suppose The Beatles and the Rolling Stones and all those other noisebags were around the town when I was there but I didn't bother with them. What was yer man's name? Mick Jagger? That Paul McCartney fella seemed to be a nice clean sort of a lad alright . . . No, no . . . we'd go to the odd dance alright, some of the showbands or a ceilí, or something like that. Lord they were great crack all the same, great to see people from home, from all over they were, north and south, east and west, like meself. Meself and a few of the girls were in the Legion of Mary, going around helping people in trouble, a bit like the Vincent de Paul I suppose. There would be a prayer meeting and a cup of tea, and it was lovely to chat and talk about home, and there was comfort in that, the routine of it, and being good girls, keeping up the prayers, even though we were away from home. Mother had warned me, there was terrible temptation over there and to mind myself! Ye young wans only laugh at that now, but that's the way it was, I suppose it's still

¹⁶ Killimor, a very small rural village in east Co. Galway

the same, only worse probably. And we walked everywhere to save the bus money to send home instead.

Now, has your father put on his jacket goin' outside? No wonder he has the sniffles again. He never thinks of it unless I remind him. What is he going to do at all, after . . .

Ah the work was lovely though, I liked the company I was with, the Tourism and Trade group, and the boss was a good man all the same. There were always parties and events cos we were promoting Ireland shur. Still, it was great to get another job back home, and in Galway too, closer to mother. Shur Rita¹⁷ was in Australia and Bernie down in South Africa at that time, ah poor mother had none of us around. I needed to be around for her, poor oul divil.

I couldn't work though after I got married, that daft 'marriage bar' or something, they called it. Wasn't that an awful stupid rule all the same! Not allowing women to work after they got married, so they could rear their families. What about all those who had no childer at all? No wonder Bernie went off to Africa, they didn't have that nonsense rule there!

Poor mother, she said to me once "I suppose I should have gone after him you know, your father, for maintenance, for something for ye girls, but the neighbours would only know then". They'd know he was gone surely, t'would be local news and she couldn't bear that, the let down, the disappointment, the shame of it I

¹⁷ Two older sisters who had emigrated in the 50's and 60's.

suppose, and then every Tom Dick and Harry talking about it, no she wouldn't stand for that, better to stay quiet and offer it up¹⁸ . . .

Oh school was a terrible place all the same. There was one teacher, I think she must have been a bit mad, honest to God. She used to pick of some of the childer and beat them around the place, there was often blood on the walls. You don't believe me now, shur you don't? I got a walloping once, on the hands, don't even remember what it was now, but mother went up one day to speak to her, and 'pon me oath, she never laid a hand on me again. She had no time for the farmer's children at all, only the doctor's, or the shop owner's, or the guard's. Still, I didn't mind, once she left me alone . . .

Fourteen miles a day, fourteen miles, that's what we had to cycle, round trip, all the way to secondary school, hail, rain or snow! Fourteen miles! Ye don't know how lucky ye were, able to come home for lunch and everything. Oh there could be ten of us across the width of the road, cycling all that way . . . telling stories and singing songs . . .

Mother had a hard life though, she was never outside of the county, don't mind up to Dublin, shur London was like another planet so it was.

Are you off home so pet? When will you be back? I do miss you when you're gone . . . Hand me the beads¹⁹ there, will you love?

¹⁸ To put up with something, a self-sacrificing metaphor.

¹⁹ Rosary beads, to assist with reciting and repetition on a long litany of prayers

Ah I loved being in the Church when I was small, I used to be in the Altar Society, cleaning the place, polishing the tabernacle, all those fancy candlesticks too, bringing in flowers. . . dressing up the statue of Our Lady for the May Altar was lovely, oh we had flowers all over it, that was so nice . . .

That our Canon Winters though, he was the parish priest when I was a young one, he was an awful contrary man all the same. He used to be so cross all the time, he'd frighten a saint. He'd go asking us girls what we were at, and who were we with, and then accusing us of being in the woods with the boys! Shur we didn't know what he was talking about, 'in the woods with the boys', wasn't he desperate! When you think of what we heard about since, all those terrible scandals, those awful awful stories, well you'd wonder, wouldn't you . . . hmmm . . . I wonder will there be any priests left at all in a few years . . . what would poor mother make of it all . . .

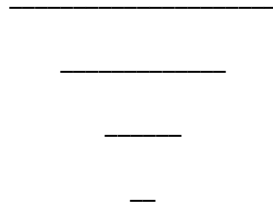
Mother was a gas woman all the same, she'd tell me nothing, she kept it all in. She wouldn't even tell me where she was born. I could never understand that, maybe she thought I'd only be asking her how she was born and all that sort of thing. . . she told me nothing about father either, only to be a good girl and to wear a clean dress when he came to visit. Tut, I dunno. I heard more about her from her friend Mary Carey than I ever knew of her when she was alive. Imagine she used to go off on the bike, the two of them, the two Mary's, off gallivanting of a Sunday, dressed up as lads! Mary said it was way better fun and they could get up to all sorts of mischief that they couldn't do if they wore the dresses. I'd say they were a right pair of tickets all the same. . .

Talking, talking . . . sometimes I say too much and sometimes not enough, or not the right thing. Didn't I say awful stupid stuff all the same, the time, you

know, when you, when you were expecting? I wasn't thinkin' straight at all, got such a land, shur wasn't she the best thing ever, the little bundle, a blessing altogether.

Shur it's all part of God's plan surely . . . all of it, every last bit of it . . .

Where're me beads again loveen?



In her 'Landscape for a Good Woman', Carol Steedman (1986) eloquently and poignantly writes of her childhood, and that of her mother's, narrating the conflicts and disruptions experienced by both, and situating the interpretations of those recollections in such a way as to give meaning to those memories in the present time. She describes experiences of childhood loss, exclusion, of lives shaping themselves around a sense of being cut off and denied, and I recognise and acknowledge a small sense of that regret and longing in my mother's stories. While she may not have lacked for the basic material things, as they grew their own food, milked their own cows and reared a few hens for valuable eggs and the occasional dinner, and there were always enough clothes and hand-me-downs between the sisters to keep them dressed, what she really yearned for were things withheld from her by the hegemonic cultural and social structures. Growing up in a society dominated by very strict Catholic mores, and without really understanding why, she recognised from an early age that she was teetering on the outer edges of social acceptability. Along with Steedman, she was raised in a household where the patriarchal figure was not confirmed by the social world she saw among her peers. Her mother was not a widow, and she was dependant on the goodwill and mercy of her older brother for a roof over her head. There was always the trepidation and fear within her mother, of causing displeasure or doing something to rock the boat,

the consequences of which could have been catastrophic. The lack of authorisation of their tenuous situation in some way helps me to account for a lot of my grandmother's reticence and secrecy, and though she would most likely not have articulated it as such, her sense of exclusion, powerlessness and class consciousness.

In order to create a history, we trace events backwards from the vantage point of the present, to evaluate them and give meaning to them, thus trying to explain events and establish pivotal connections between them. Like Steedman (1986), I too am unable to explain the connections between many of my mother's or grandmother's stories. The tensions between what I remember and what I have forgotten, and my mother's or grandmother's version of events, cannot be resolved. However that overriding sense of the loss of her father, without ever having had the opportunity for a public display of mourning and grief, along with the expected accompanying sympathy and support, was none the less translated into my mother's lifelong sense of "never being good enough", and became a dominant theme of her life, though unlike Steedman's, did not manifest itself in bitterness or any sense of unfairness.

Along with many other countries worldwide, Ireland introduced a work marriage ban in 1933, and while it disappeared from most jurisdictions in the 1950's, it was sustained in Ireland far longer, existing on the statute books until 1973 (Redmond and Harford, 2010). The moral and social obligation of enforcement of this restrictive legislative measure, which sought to limit women's participation in public life and in public sector employment, brought with it the expectation that women should undertake a disproportionate share of care and love work, while also ensuring their economic dependency (Baker, 2009; Lynch and McLaughlin 1995). For many women of my mother's era, the immeasurable talents, invaluable experiences and potential enrichment which they could have brought to the workplace and to society as a whole, were rendered impotent by such an enactment. Her elder married sister, who incidentally remained childless, took a radical step and left the country in order to remain working. For mother, it

appeared to reinforce her own feelings of inadequacy, of not being able to contribute to the family income, unlike the way that she had seen her mother do before her by selling eggs, making butter and trading in fowl for better pieces of meat or other necessary household items. I would argue that this state enforced servitude further emphasised and reinforced in her, a sense of powerlessness and exclusion in not being able to fully realise her talents, energy and boundless potential, like many many other women of her generation.

Though hugely faithful and actively involved and dedicated to her religion and its practice, the often detrimental and far reaching influence of the Church on the lives of Irish citizens, particularly women, took its toll on mother. The revelations in recent years which uncovered systematic covering up of child sex abuse, mass hidden burials of babies in mother and baby homes, and the flagrant hypocrisy which permeated the hierarchical structures of the Church, left her with a deep sense of disappointment, disillusionment and of feeling let down by this overriding pillar in her life. Yet she still believed, and retained her deep faith right up to the end of her life.

I came across the words of Le Guin (2004) recently and these particular lines resonated with me and left me with the sense that this is what I might have liked to say to my mother, as some sort of reassurance and comfort to her. I leave them with you now and let you ponder on them as you will.

Her work, I really think her work
isn't fighting, isn't winning,
isn't being the Earth, isn't being the Moon.

Her work, I really think her work
is finding what her real work is
and doing it,
her work, her own work,
her being human,
her being in the world.

Le Guin (2004, p. 292)

Chapter 7

Tying up the Threads and Standing Back to View the Tapestry

As I come towards the end of this exploration, I take a deep breath and ponder over the work completed and consider where the various paths followed have taken me. I shelter under the boughs of the great oak tree we encountered earlier, 'an darach mór', leaning back against its strong trunk as I rest and reflect on my journey, hearing its voice reminding me of where I have been and probing me about my discoveries, the voices heard, the memories awakened, the threads unravelled, and where it has all brought me to now.

So, tell me, what did you find out, what was the purpose of this exploration?

At the start of this journey, I set out to explore the theme of belonging, of what it means to be part of a community, and what shapes my identity and my sense of place? Like the Arnolfini painting mentioned earlier in chapter 1, I sought to reveal the background of what we take for granted, to make the invisible visible, and to glimpse at previously hidden and unexplored stories.

Some of the areas I wanted to inquire into involved looking at the effects of displacement and the loss of place, where is my community now and what makes me part of that community, where is 'home' and what is the deeper meaning of home? I further wanted to probe into what helps us to identify with a 'culture of place', and if a sense of belonging is ultimately about people or place or something else. Part of that inquiry involved an exploration of language and culture and the connections that people make in order to create a sense of belonging within their community. Along with that, I also wished to explore branches of my own family tree, to help me understand who I am and of how the stories may have helped me

to come to an understanding of myself, my own sense of community, identity and belonging.

Some of that untangling also meant that I had to inquire into strands such as culture and identity, power and equality, memory and nostalgia, the dilemma of conforming or remaining on the outside, as well as deep visceral connections with the land and ownership.

I set out on this venture to explore these themes in an iterative way, taking different angles and using a variety of methods, and viewing the overall topic from a cyclical hermeneutic approach. I also wanted to inquire into this particularly from an Irish context, to follow the threads and see where they led me, and in the words of Sparkes (2003), seek to understand rather than explain, reveal rather than make a startling new discovery, and draw out the stories of lives lived, and to give expression to otherwise previously unheard and unbidden voices. By doing so, I hoped to provide a more faceted approach to community, place and identity, viewing these through an interpretative prism.

To tell what you unearthed, what understanding you came to about your own learning, identity, community and what it means to belong?

As I try to respond to this question of substance, I cannot put out of my mind the words from a recent conversation I had with someone close to me personally. She was upset and distraught about her own family situation which was changing profoundly due to a breakdown in a fundamental relationship. As she wept on my shoulder, she kept repeating "but where is my home now, it doesn't even feel like home anymore, what is home anyway?" All I could think of to say was simply "it's wherever your heart is, wherever you're happy, that's when you're home". It was only then that I understood, and I have to admit it shook me a little to think that in all the exploration and journeying I had done on this very theme, on which we had

not particularly had any discussion, that this was where the 'yellow brick road' was leading me towards, through heart and life and history, along all the highways and byways, back to myself. I came to the realisation that belonging is not merely about where I have come from, who my family is or what they did or didn't do, it is not only about the culture I was immersed in or the landscape from which I emerged, or the community and people with whom I grew and continue to grow. For me, belonging is even more than that, it is all of these things and none of these things. It is the accumulation of and the connection between all of the threads of stories and experiences that go into the making of my own story. As Cupitt (1991) so eloquently describes it, we are all a tangle of tales, tales that connect me to the present and anchor me to the past. I can identify with Randall (2014) when he expresses that stories are incomplete and always unfolding, and I recognise that I too am a storyteller, free to tell myself however I wish.

Well you started off this research wanting to probe into community, identity and belonging from an Irish cultural context, so why was it important to inquire into your own autoethnography at the outset of this journey?

I had started off this whole exploration intending to research what belonging and identity and community meant to others, in a broader societal context, to anyone and everyone else except myself. It seems ridiculous now in hindsight, but I can now humbly acknowledge that in order to understand what belonging means, I have to understand and own what it means to me. The other narratives, both family and community stories, are part of the tangle of threads from which I can weave that fabric of understanding. My ancestors stories and my interpretations of their stories and experiences, have also shaped me, helping to form my identity, as have my experiences of where I have lived and those whom I have encountered along the way. The story of my life as I have internalised or digested it is the story that I alone can tell, and this inside story is what I make of the outside story and all that

I can know of it. It is my creation, what I make in my heart and mind out of the raw material of my existence.

Remind me again of some of the stories you uncovered and what they helped you realise in relation to yourself about community, identity and belonging from their telling.

When I revisit the story of my great-grandfather, I am aware that I did not set out to represent the experiences of emigrants to Australia in the late 19th century. Instead, the endeavour was to uncover the hidden, to try to understand actions and events into a meaningful whole by interweaving known elements of reality with probability, and possibility with enigma. There was certainly a sense of disconnection when Paddy returned from his travels. It is important to remember that he was gone for over 25 years, his prime years essentially, and when he came back, all his peers had moved ahead, probably married, had children, some were possibly even grandparents themselves. He was yet unmarried, and when he did wed a local woman, Catherine Foley, she bore him eight children in rapid succession and died of an unknown illness when her youngest was only three years of age. As a family, we had always understood that Paddy had been viewed as being disloyal locally, in taking up the farm for himself that would instead have been divided between neighbouring farmers, possibly causing some degree of jealousy. In the interim since I wrote his story and shared it with my father, he came across some documents which were written accounts of a retired judge who had presided in the area during the early decades of the last century, transcribed in 1959. He recollects some notable cases in his court during his tenure as judge, particularly the one he called the case of the 'Rineen Ranch'. A fuller picture is illuminated in the account which notes that there had been violent dispute and agitation for acquisition and division of that ranch by locals, led apparently by my great-grandfather. In the end, the landlord surreptitiously sold the land behind their backs, to Paddy. The judge notes that this was a man of extreme obstinacy and determination, for despite over

thirty years of intense boycotting and enmity by his understandably extremely disgruntled neighbours, he held onto the land, requiring police protection night and day all during that time. The judge adds, that for thirty years no neighbour had spoken to the man, and for over thirty years, no matter where he went, to Church, to fairs, to markets, three constabulary men accompanied him with loaded carbines on a sidecar to protect him. This addition to the tale throws another slant on Paddy's story, who had seemingly run out of patience with his neighbours who had procrastinated and failed to raise the purchase money for themselves, and shines a clearer light as to why he could never quite fit back or be accepted into his community. His absence for several decades certainly played a part in his outsider status. However long a local had been away from their community, there would always be a welcome for them and they would be accepted back into society. Due to Paddy's perceived disloyalty to his own neighbours, he was rejected by the wider community and never again acknowledged or received within the local area. I recognise that while absence and distance may cause links with community to be weakened somewhat over time, this is nothing to the rift that can be created by greed, duplicity and betrayal. As someone who had stepped outside the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, Paddy suffered the consequences at the hands of power exercised over him by the community for the remainder of his lifetime, exiled and isolated as an outsider.

When I look back at Séamus's story, I can see that while he is part of the local community, having lived there for most of his adult life, but only peripherally so. His language and culture exclude him from full participation and acceptance by his neighbours, and the family's lack of engagement in some of the main pillars of rural life and activity, for example attendance at the local school, participation in the parish GAA²⁰ team, and partaking of social interaction in the local pub, created further distance and separation over time. An innate shyness and a deep sense of

²⁰ GAA, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Ireland's largest and most widespread sporting organisation, established in 1884 with the intention of preserving and cultivating Irish national sports and pastimes. It is extremely vibrant and energetic, with branches and clubs in every parish in the country and in most cities around the world where there are Irish people to be found.

privacy which to external eyes may have appeared like indifference, also created barriers to greater participation and prevented the forging of deeper relationships. Yet ironically it is the music he brings, which is a strong element of his tradition, which gives him some kind of a gateway to the community and the local inhabitants. In addition, his friendship with an important gatekeeper, Tom, provided valuable opportunities for integration and allowed him greater potential access to the community which he may otherwise not have been able to breach on his own behalf. These openings which had the promise for creating even greater prospects for assimilation within the community, were not taken advantage of fully. As a blow in to the same locality, I can empathise with the sense of exclusion, feelings of being the outsider, of occasional loneliness which I certainly would have felt in the early years of moving to the area. Yet it was my background and experiences within my family of origin of community activism, of being involved and engaging with groups in the area, from choirs, musical society, community development group, festival committee, tidy towns group which allowed me access to the local community life, bringing me inside doors, sitting around kitchen tables, sharing confidences and stories. Though this level of access can never compare to a friend of mine from the drama group, whose family has lived in the area for over 600 years and who is quite closely related to at least 200 people in the vicinity, I still feel very connected to and part of the community here because of my level of engagement and participation.

Within my mother's story, there is a strong sense of loss and her feeling of being somewhat different in not having an obvious father figure in her life, leading to silence and secrecy from her mother, thus adding to that perception of exclusion and difference. My grandmother's subsequent sense of servitude and dependence on her two brothers for a roof over their heads, permeated throughout the whole of her life, my mother's life, and even into my own experience as a child in that household. There was always a sense of not getting in the way of the brothers, of keeping your head down and not making noise, and a constant underlying feeling

that you were only ever a barely tolerated bothersome guest in their house and yet needing to feel grateful for that somehow. Through the telling of this story, and many of the threads which have gone into its shaping, I more clearly understand my mother's sense of subservience and powerlessness and her feelings, that right up to her passing, of not being good enough. That for me seems to have translated into grandmother almost having to buy approval and acceptance from the neighbours and the community as a whole in the shape of underselling her farm produce, or giving household items away including, as my mother lamented, her one and only doll, and always the pressure on my mother to be a 'good girl', not to cause any bother or to step out of line. Within the household itself, there was a constant feeling of being on tenterhooks, and the lack of certainty about the house itself being a place of sanctuary. I now recognise and understand with the benefit of hindsight, how this fed into feelings of insecurity, inadequacy and anxiety which prevailed throughout my mother's life.

Within the body of 'Women's Stories', the renderings within the various segments have given me the opportunity to express and reveal what had previously been unsaid, and allowed me to explore and depict difficult themes and times in my life through a variety of representations. I have a new appreciation and understanding of my own reactions and feelings at the time of to an unplanned pregnancy and marriage breakdown, and viewing the situation through the eyes of my mother's experiences, I can understand and even begin to forgive her responses and reactions to the situations depicted at those times. From my own perspective I can understand how breaching the boundaries of societal, if not familial norms of 'good behaviour', and the feelings of isolation from the sundering and unravelling of a fundamental personal relationship, further enhanced the feelings of being on the outside and the lack of certainty about where I could call 'home'. My own recollections from these experiences through their retelling, was of an overwhelming feeling of loneliness, and the sense of a loss of connection or belonging. I questioned my own identity, not certain of how to label myself, not

willing to be called 'that unmarried mother', 'single parent', or the more recent confused status of being neither single nor married.

Ellis (2004) has written about how research, writing, story and method connect the autobiographical and personal to the social, cultural and political. So for the narrators, how are their realities constructed and constrained by these values?

Developing the skills to connect the personal to the cultural and political context is central to critical practice. Without this, each personal case becomes clinical with the emphasis placed on the inadequacies of the individual rather than on the inequities of the system (Ledwith, 2005). The challenge for me as a narrative inquirer within the community is to look more deeply into the pensieve of the personal, while framing it within the wider political picture. When I consider and try to frame my understanding on what this means in reality, the phrase "what if" keeps ping-ponging in my head and will not be silenced. What if the economic and historical circumstances which initiated the displacement and transplantation of hundreds of families from the west of Ireland had not materialised, would Séamus and his ilk have undergone the same cultural and social divide, or would the inevitable shrinkage of their culture and language in the face of 'progression' from the dominant society have instigated the same consequences? What if the power exerted by the Catholic Church in Ireland had not been as dominant in my mother's lifetime, and indeed in my own early days, how would our values and gendered experiences of conforming, behaviour and social interactions as women been expressed? Would the same level of subjugation, disempowerment, oppression and inequality have been experienced? What if it had not been necessary for my great grandfather to leave for Australia, and if on his return he had not done a double turn on his neighbours and community by reneging on their planned shared ownership of land, would he instead have lived placidly and quietly where he had been born, continuing the traditions of his forefathers? Or would there

have been a breakdown in the relationship with his community at some stage due to his obviously stubborn disposition, or in relation to the ever contentious issues of inheritance and ownership? These themes have both constructed and constrained the personal stories and lived experiences of each narrator as I have illustrated throughout the research. The response to these questions is underpinned for me by the theme of equality, and supporting Ledwith's (2005) viewpoint that community development and community education embrace the deeply personal and the profoundly political, I also recognise and appreciate that power and empowerment, poverty and privilege, nature and humanity are all inextricably linked by the interdependent web of life on earth.

As I noted on occasion during the course of this dissertation, narrative inquiry often focuses on difference, of aspiring to open up particularities of experience to a wider viewing, which tends to focus on the personal or the local, the unusual or marginal of lived experience. While not the primary focus of this particular dissertation, it is the personal and political dimension that I have steered towards, by linking the use of story for reflection, and illuminating what Ledwith (2005) calls the 'little stories' portrayed here, voicing isolation, exclusion, marginalisation, loneliness and disempowerment, which give depth to the bigger pictures, and the personal can therefore be understood as political.

A number of themes arose for you during the course of this research. How have they expanded, and explain how the literature has helped with your understanding of these fundamental concepts?

In thinking of how to respond to this question, my mind is drawn to the birthplace of one of our narrators, Séamus, and the dark brooding mountains of his native Connemara landscape. If we concentrate on them alone, then we see nothing only gloomy peaks and outcrops. Yet all around and in between, in the valleys, there are lakes and pools whose surfaces reflect and diffuse the light with colour and

brightness. From reading back over the stories and fragments, a feature for me which dominates are the elements which appear to have served to highlight the absence of belonging within community, the darkness and the broodiness. Factors such as the isolation and exclusion experienced by the narrators, feeling of powerlessness, gender bias, longing, loneliness, of outsider status, these varied circumstances which are illustrative of the boundaries and fences erected by society and culture within which people are confined, emerge from the underbelly of the stories.

For example, aspects such as loss, longing and nostalgia for something which was held and was subsequently left behind, become apparent in the narratives of Paddy and Séamus. A lack of rootedness in community, in the locality where they spent the majority of their lives, created a distance and a sense of being the outsider. The chasm in Paddy's case was caused by a deliberate act which in the eyes of his neighbours was irreparable. In Séamus's case, what started as a small fracture due to the natural wariness of natives to anybody new, widened and grew as a result of his inability or unwillingness to bridge that gap which, while it could have started to define him as being 'one of us', certainly served to keep him firmly in the 'one of them' camp. The writings of McMillan and Chavis (1986) reinforce this evidence to an extent, when they talk of conditions such as membership, influence and a shared emotional connection which produce a sense of community. However additional factors which they discuss such as length of community residency, satisfaction with the community, and the number of neighbours one could identify on a first name basis are contradicted by the experiences of several of the narrators here. Both Paddy and Séamus spent the larger part their lives in a community where they knew all of their neighbours and indeed in Paddy's case, were related to many of them, though for both men, their levels of satisfaction may have been questionable. The same inconsistency applies too in the case of my experience and of my mother's. I tend to veer towards the thinking of Cohen (1985) who talks about the shifting emphasis on community as a form of social interaction based on locality, to one which is concerned with meaning and identity. I also identify with

Barr and Hashagen (2000) in their description of communities where personal and interpersonal relationships are well established and how their functioning is critical to rootedness and to how a community actually works.

As I noted earlier, the themes of powerlessness and domination emerge in several of the stories, particularly in those told by the women. The concept of power as raised by Lukes (2005) where he discusses how domination can limit a person's self-determination, as well as demoralise and undermine their self-confidence, thus constraining their potential for self-fulfilment, makes even more sense to me now in relation to my mother's story, and indeed my own. This is further illustrated to me by the words of Du Bois (1969) who describes feelings of being an outsider and a pervading sense of being disapproved of by others. Abrams et al. (2005) further discuss this outsider status, or experience of exclusion which Twenge and Baumeister (2005) note can be damaging for humans, both psychologically and materially, creating an increased climate of mistrust, tension and inequality. I recognise that for someone who is experiencing social isolation or rejection from society, feelings of aggression, defensiveness, or depression and a shutting off of emotional responses are not unusual (Abrams et al, 2005). This is expressed for me in the stories of both Paddy and Séamus in their rejection of and by their respective communities. The issue of language also serves to exacerbate the outsider status, as experienced by Séamus and accentuates the significance of breaking down language barriers, and I strongly concur with Ledwith (2005) of the importance in involving people from communities outside of Ireland who have chosen to make their home in this country, in community education and social inclusion programmes. I acknowledge, along with Abrams et al. (2005) that while there are situations where such diversity and exclusion in language and traditions could be seen as something distinctive and exclusive, for people like Séamus who were transplanted from the west of Ireland, these served to accentuate the boundaries and their sense of 'otherness'.

The power over who is in and who is out, and also whether one complies with and conforms to what are the expected social norms as expounded by Inglis (1998),

Fahey (2007) and Walsh (2015), was certainly in the past strongly influenced by the Catholic Church, which would have been recognised as a key marker of belonging and identity from an Irish context. This overpowering dominance and authority no longer holds sway among the greater part of the population, as evidenced in a number of recent referenda which were passed by an overwhelming majority, including the Marriage Equality Act in 2015, the Regulation for the Termination of Pregnancy in 2018, and the very low attendance rates recorded at the recent Papal visit to Ireland. However the authority and power which the Church held over society as a whole, and particularly over women, internalised social perceptions of females as the 'good' girl or daughter or wife, creating identities which were defined by their relationships to men, and in many cases, forced an inferior status and identity on women which were gendered and patriarchal, and as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) note, were often involuntary. My appreciation and understanding of the situation faced by each of the narrators as outsiders and the consequences of non-conformity as noted by Abrams et al. (2005), is reinforced by Lukes (2005), where he talks about how people can be irredeemably defined by a fixed and dependant status. Nonetheless, I find that I am more inclined to appreciate and veer towards Probyn's views (1996) where she discusses the significance of identity as being in transition, always producing itself through the combined process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong.

And what does the literature tell us about how to find a sense of self-fulfillment and belonging within communities?

Crisp (2010) talks about the importance of making connections and of how they are a precursor to belonging and the establishment of one's identity in a group or culture. The educational system is an important site and one process for promoting equality of love, care and solidarity and yet it has neglected this task. Schools and educational institutions need to develop an appreciation of the intrinsic role which emotions play in the process of teaching and learning. As educators, it is important

to recognise the significance of devising educational experiences which enable learners to develop their emotional skills or personal intelligences. Community education can further provide a way of responding to oppression and discrimination, through for example, building self-esteem, consciousness raising, enabling an understanding of others' perspectives, capacity building and empowerment (Connolly, 2010). Supporting Ledwith's (2005) viewpoint that community development and community education embrace the deeply personal and the profoundly political as noted earlier, I also recognise and appreciate that power and empowerment, poverty and privilege, nature and humanity are all inextricably linked by symbiotic tangles of life and living.

I noticed that you talked earlier in chapter 3 about the methodological approach taken within your research. So what were the implications of taking that pathway in this particular narrative inquiry? How did it work out, were there any difficulties along the way?

At the outset of this dissertation I mentioned that I am not drawn to statistics and numbers and like Clandinin and Connolly (2000), I abhor the notion that in order to be researched, experience needs to be reduced to tests and numerical devices. You may recall that in chapter 1 and again in chapter 3, I outlined the justification for the intermingled and blurred paradigmatic approaches taken throughout this research. I noted that the interpretative approach advocates delving into the meaning rather than the causes of human actions, and undertaking personal and interactive methods of data collection in what Speedy (2008) describes as extending, provoking and creating new knowledge, while also emphasising constituted realities and rich description. The transformative approach is conscious of the complexities of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and further acknowledges the influence of power in the collaborations between both parties.

In order to uncover and reveal previously hidden stories, a diverse range of qualitative methods were employed. By choosing, deliberately or otherwise, to represent the conversations, fragments, fictionalised representations, and recollections as pieces of narrative research, I have tried to convey something of the paths and by-roads which were travelled.

Using letters and stream of consciousness segments, elements of Paddy's life which had not previously been told to anyone other than my father, were given a medium in which to sprout and flourish. Further explorations exhumed other elements of his story which help elucidate his continued dislocation and isolation within his community for the remainder of his life. As I look back over the excerpts of the interview with Séamus, I can clearly see that any ideas of a collaborative co-creation of meaning making did not quite work out as I had naively anticipated. There is a lot more to be written about what was not said and what may lie within the pleats and the liminal spaces of the conversations. Within the Women's stories, my mother was given a previously unheard voice in fragments of recollections, which allowed expression for her feelings of loss for a father figure and her sense of isolation within an environment of secrecy which prevailed in the family during her childhood. Her experiences as a woman of the disempowerment, oppression and exclusion perpetrated on her gender by church and state, were also witnessed and made visible in those extracts. Revealing my own fragments of stories allowed me to uncover and voice experiences which had previously been unspoken and unsayable.

So tell me what you have learned and how you have developed throughout the research process of ethnography and narrative inquiry.

I reflect over the research and writing process and can fully appreciate Ellis's feelings (2004) when she expressed that the process would not be pain free, that it would involve some degree of emotional turmoil which accompanies the

vulnerability required to scrutinise oneself and reveal to others what is uncovered, and I wonder if I have disclosed too much? Was this merely an opportunity for pure self-indulgence in the name of research? Did I avail of this opportunity as some sort of catharsis for my own personal journey? I console any possible feeling of angst and potential discomfort with the reminder of Holman-Jones (2005) that autoethnography sets a scene and recounts a story which weaves intricate connections within life, creating charged moments of clarity, connection and change. I am ever conscious too that throughout this whole process, the supportive embrace of the hermeneutic approach has surrounded my reading, research and my writing, a spinning and evolving spiral which has created and strengthened a sense of understanding from the interactions and interconnections between past and present, between myself as researcher and the researched, and between time and place. This vital place is one which, as Usher explains, must be observed from inside, through the experiences of people with the purpose of understanding and demystifying, rather than explanation (Usher, 1996; Cohen et al., 2007). I am reassured, comforted and encouraged too by reminding myself of the experiences and words of more eloquent and accomplished exponents of this genre and approach, writers such as Richardson, Ellis, Ronai, among many others. Their stories have inspired and nurtured acts of witnessing, in coming to know and learn about others, in engaging with constructions of truth, in making connections beyond the self of the author, and in engaging in meaning making which can thereby contribute to sociological understanding (Ropers-Huilman, 1999; Sparkes, 2001).

Conscious too of the complex choreography between you as reader and the various narrators within this dissertation, as described by Riessman (2008), I acknowledge that your interaction will evoke different responses from the writing and stories (Iser, 1993). I can empathise with Speedy who writes of her own interest in narrative research being very much as a collaborative co-inquirer (2008). She stresses that paying greater attention to the more ephemeral art of narrative research might

lead to more transformative research conversations. I would like to think that this has been the case here.

So can this type of research do more though? Well wasn't it Denzin and Lincoln who outlined how qualitative research can advance a democratic project committed to social justice in an age of uncertainty? I recall that they said that anyway, back in the early part of this century?

Yes that is correct, and Chase also wrote passionately about this theme in 2005, questioning the relationship between narrative inquiry and social change, and exploring how and when representations of others' stories can encourage social justice and democratic processes (Chase, 2005). Working on the understanding that narrative inquiry can often focus on marginalisation and difference, though not particularly with the intention of discovery, but more so with the desire to reveal and uncover particularities of experience to a wider viewing by focussing on the personal, the marginal and the borderlands of lived experience, it therefore creates possibilities for transformation and change. While the voices in these stories may not be urgent or emergency narratives (Beverley, 2000), they are however portrayed to give voice to previously silenced and marginalised stories, not of great trauma or poverty or violence, but of oppression, exclusion and isolation, powerful bulwarks against the realisation of self-fulfilment and belonging. By hopefully conceiving a sense of empathy with the narrators, the reader may be enabled, in the words of Frank (2000), to take the other's perspective, which is a necessary step in constructive social movement and change. The way in which the narratives have been interpreted also provides opportunities for revealing the power of what Tierney (2000) called oppressive metanarratives, where the explication of how the narrator's story is constrained by, and strains against the mediating aspects of culture, society and organisations, thus moving the reader to understand the stories in new ways.

What then are you left with, and what have you learned from this writing experience?

Pointless stories are met with the withering rejoinder, 'So what?' Every good narrator is continually warding off this question; when his (sic) narrative is over it should be unthinkable for a bystander to say 'So what?'
(Labov, 1972, p. 270)

When reflecting on the process of 'writing as inquiry', the lines from Jeanette Winterson (2004) illuminate the way for me somewhat, where she writes of lit-up moments from amidst the gloom. Even as the final lines are teased from my reluctant fingers, this composition has changed and morphed like an uncontrollable amoebic creature. I have used the writing of these episodes and stories, I hope, without the self-absorption or author saturation so disparaged by others (Davies, 1999; Geertz, 1988), but rather as a spectator "who has taken us somewhere we couldn't otherwise go to" (Behar, 1996, p. 14). Rather than pure self-indulgence, I would hope that they perform an act of witnessing, of empathy and of connection, as does Speedy (2008), when she refers to the spaces between writer and reader as imaginative sites in which knowledge is extended, provoked and created in new ways. In seeking to find my own voice, I have attempted to counterbalance my own paucity of confidence with a need to provide a perspective from which to read my personal experiences, to understand the experiences of the other participants in the stories and to explore how they have impacted upon and continue to influence my work as a community activist and as a woman. The spiral of writing and understanding has certainly helped me as writer, in negotiating the folding and unfolding of meaning within the texts.

Knowing that there is so much more I have to learn about 'writing as inquiry' after having spent years writing no more than constructive feedback on learners' assignments, creating session plans for working with groups, generating

reports for various educational providers locally and nationally, my own confidence and knowledge of the writing process has expanded greatly since undertaking this dissertation. Even as I was about to hit the submit button, I reneged, withdrew, and deleted vast chunks, even one piece of which I was particularly proud, in terms of its eloquence, its structure, its content and its assumed cleverness. Yet it did not fit. The context in which it was written was not clear enough and any further explanation would have far exceeded a reasonable word count. Should I have deleted one of the other pieces instead, or had I indulged myself too much in yet another episode? Have I revealed too much, disclosed more than I intended? Uncertainty, exposure and insecurity niggle and scrape at me, and I can empathise so much with Leitch (2006) as she struggled with her own gaping sense of vulnerability when writing about her experience of maintaining her position in academia.

Writing as inquiry is certainly not as fluid a process as I had expected and seems to be quite a slippery customer (Speedy, 2008), remaining fairly elusive and evading capture many times. On occasion, I felt I had grasped it, trout-like on the riverbank, yet it writhed and slipped away before it could be landed. Possibly the biggest learning curve for me, is coming to realise the complications and intricacies of writing as research; that in offering oneself up with words, with feelings, with experiences not often shared, I am opening doorways to possibility, actuality, potential for change and transformation. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe the representations of personal narratives as having the power to

enact a politics of possibility which shape critical awareness,
disrupt the status quo and probe questions of identity (p. 417).

While not claiming that this writing has done so, the experience of writing as inquiry certainly has aroused my Rapunzel like understanding of its potential, and, in the words of Leggo (2008), the realisation that;

Writing does not enable the writer to hammer down secure truth; writing enables the writer to explore possibilities for meaningful living in the world (p. 171).

So ultimately where do we find belonging, how do we know that we are finally home?

When I first set out on this journey, I thought I knew how this exploration would develop and that it would be a fairly straightforward telling of stories which I had encountered and which had seeded and grown during the course of the EdD programme. As the stories bloomed and ripened, their dynamic has changed with the telling and performing, unearthing new knowledge and understanding. And I am constantly surprised at my own reactions to what is evolving onto the page, querying myself as to why she or he or I told something in a particular way, how that then impacts on the story, and what that all really means. My own learning and understanding of concepts of belonging, home and community have expanded and stretched beyond the bare threads of my original perceptions at the outset of this journey. That outwardly spinning spiral from society, to community, to family, has contracted right back, and been condensed down to the core of self. While vital constituent ingredients such as location and place, identity, memory, culture and home are some of the keystones of building a framework within which a sense of belonging and home can be nurtured and given sanctuary, the fundamental essence is within me, is myself. These elements scaffold the evolving construction which is myself, a constantly unfolding creation, subject to revision and reinterpretation. This 'inside out' story is what I tell and show to others, and what I make of what has happened to me and before me. I recognise that without the fundamental elements of love, care and solidarity which fuel and encourage that essence, gifting it with life and spirit, then the very feelings of dislocation, disempowerment, exclusion, loneliness and outsider status which were glimpsed within the various stories become instead the focal point, obliterating the view and

making it more difficult to clearly see the trail of crumbs, and find the pathway to self-fulfilment and ultimately, towards home.

As Abrams et al. (2005) have highlighted, people want to be confident that they are part of a relationship or group that gives them meaning, security and positive prospects. Therefore our longing and nostalgia for rocks and fields, for streets and buildings, for trees and mountains, are superseded by love and care, by human relationships. Baker et al. (2009) explored the theme of caring for others and being cared for, and discussed extensively the importance and extent of affective relationships, noting that these are integral to everyday existence and well-being. Arguments can be put for or against this opinion. However as I discussed in chapter 2, components of love, care and solidarity as key ingredients of affective relationships play a fundamental role in the fabric of social, economic and cultural life, and the significance of articulating these elements cannot be underestimated. In legitimising these components, it may be possible to activate and engage an empathetic public which could move politics from a view of self-interest to a politics of mutual concern (Baker et al., 2009). Therefore we are enabled to live life more creatively, spiritually and socially, thus increasing our sense of fulfilment. Maybe then, we could, like Dorothy in the 'Wizard of Oz', arm ourselves with courage, engage our intellect, and above all, with love, follow the yellow brick road which leads us home, to a place of sanctuary, a remembered place, a place of emotional well-being within a constellation of relationships, a place of belonging and roots. The words of John O'Donoghue (2007), poet and philosopher echo my own sentiments and thoughts, and encapsulate the theme more beautifully and completely.

When it is a place of shelter and love, there is no place like home. It is then one of the sweetest words of any language. It suggests a nest where intimacy and belonging foster identity and individuality . . . To be, we need to be home. When a place to belong is assured, the adventure of growth can begin with great promise (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 96).

Winding in the skein

I draw towards the end of this journey, and look out over the landscape. A light mist is clearing and the sun, a blazing gleam of ochre thrusts itself over the horizon, as I contemplate on the tracks I have followed and paths which I have pursued, a thin thread held in my hand as I make my way out of the labyrinth. What other threads could I have pursued and untangled? Could I have said more about women and explored the gender issue further? Would a foray into the area of nationalism and nationhood have strengthened the discussion? Might a turn towards the more topical and often controversial theme of immigration and migrants have been beneficial or relevant? Could I have elaborated on the importance of learning about emotions and feelings? Would an exploration into the experiences of the returning Irish have been more interesting? I realise that greater courage is required in order to challenge myself in future, and I am grateful to Richardson (1997) when she says that "in our writing . . . there is no such thing as 'getting it right', only getting it differently contoured and nuanced" (p. 91). And I am left knowing that there are more seedlings left in the soil, more bits of stories and threads of tales which need to be unpicked and unravelled, told and retold, but which are for another day, another adventure, and I grasp the thread firmly and make my way towards the horizon.

Postscript

May you listen to your longing to be free.

May the frames of our belonging be generous enough for your dreams . . .

May there be kindness in your gaze when you look within.

May you never place high walls between the light and yourself.

May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you, mind you and embrace you in belonging.

(O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 61)

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